

Note on LINK Network meeting held on 29 January 2015 at the LINK Perth office

Present: Helen Todd (Chair, RS), John Mayhew (APRS), John Thomson (SCNP), Diarmid Hearn (NTS), Charles Dundas (WTS), Sue Hamilton (Planning Democracy), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG), Charles Strang (APRS), Tim Ambrose (SWLG, Treasurer), Matthew Crighton (FoES), Paul Walton (RSPB), Sheila George (RSPB), Pete Ritchie (Nourish Scotland), Jen Anderson, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh (staff).

1. Apologies

Jonathan Wordsworth (AS), Simon Jones (SWT), Mary Church (FoES), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Aedan Smith (PTF), Sam Gardner (WWFS), Deborah Long, Paul Walton (RSPB), Ross Finnie, Vicki Swales (RSPB), Eddie Palmer (SB), Rob Brooker (BES), Calum Duncan (MCS), Rea Cris (Staff)

2. Conclusions from Board, Congress, Strategic Planning in brief.

The Board discussed the robustness of LINK as a defender of the environment and if training on negotiation skills, as may be required by members/TFs – tone, positions, bottom lines, allies, upping the ante in general, would be useful. Other networks (SFF, SLE, NFUS) are perceived as clearer/robust in their demands, compared to LINK. Reasons for this were discussed, SLE does not represent the interests of NTS, RSPB etc who are members while LINK is a consensual coalition; each TF has or should have its advocacy strategy, with opportunities to be more robust discussed within the TF; agreed there is scope for greater ambition in LINK asks – perception that we are too nice, too reasonable; up against professional (unethical) PR people who need to be stood up to, etc. Congress conclusions ([report](#) on website) in relation, to be bolder about praising the good, calling out the bad, amplifying our voice, showing our ‘big stick’ - that we will go public with our honest opinions of what happens eg Wildlife Crime, to get better results. Interest in bespoke negotiations training was strong around the table. **Action: staff & Board to firm up proposal for training**

Staff and trustees met Andrew Bachell of SNH on 26 Jan ([note](#) on the website). The Review of Protected Areas, on SNH’s website since 28 Jan, will be influential, with several issues papers stemming from it. JT, a member of the panel, considers this a challenging area on which SNH has stuck its neck out; the paper has not come from a trimming of budgets perspective, even well-protected PAs alone are not enough, and that Scotland as a society needs to fundamentally rethink how we use natural resources. SNH expects criticism from eNGOs and wants LINK to run a workshop. SNH is interested in our Narrative work also. SNH will invite a presentation to its Board, which needs awareness raising of what LINK and eNGOs are about.

Action: staff & Board

CNPA meeting ([note](#) on website); covered a lot of issues; Park were keen for eNGOs to take to government issues like housing projections which are not in their remit. Discussion of relationships between NGO and agencies, agencies and government followed, as per our [Governance Matters](#) report, a fundamental and long term strategy to influence reform.

JMT’s leaving LINK at the end of March will impact on the work of various TFs. Helen reported the Board’s morning discussion: Trustees were minded not to dictate to TFs how they should handle this, that it was up to each to consider how to best manage the situation. Whether DTF was a special case, had been considered by the Board, and further guidance would follow. **Action: relevant TFs**

Strategic Planning meeting in November had discussed revisiting **LINK’s energy positions**, and draft terms of reference had been discussed by the Board in the morning and would shortly go to MBs for views. The

process will require their input and LINK discretionary project funding to take forward, within the next 6 months. **Action: staff**

Feedback from contact meetings between Trustees and MBs held in 2014 was discussed, much of the feedback had been very positive. A note of key points will be available, and these meetings offered to all members annually. **Action: Staff**

Ministerial access is being negotiated with SG currently, with civil servants wanting to manage Minister diary time for LINK and G6 meetings, and eNGOs looking to increase access to the Cabinet Secretary and for some commitment to informal meetings with the Minister. Meantime, a delegation of 12 from LINK covering the range of interests will meet the Minister shortly.

3. Round up of other developments affecting LINK work since November

Andy's next Political Strategy Report will be prepared for the April Board meeting. For the May elections, a draft of our manifesto asks will be sent round in Feb for sign-up. There has been lots going on: Carbon Bubble paper published, Wildlife Crime paper nearly ready to go, Land Reform Bill consultation draft response with members, Energy review plans as discussed above; slow burn governance issues still progressing, talking about fundamentals; Economics seminar for members coming up on 18th Feb. The Governance Group wants to influence manifestos for Holyrood 2016 elections and to help MBs to do so in their work with the political parties. A rough draft manifesto outline, based on LINK Referendum Challenge asks, to be translated into policy asks, will go round in March, for MBs and TFs to discuss and respond on, a mutually informative process. Election tactics have been discussed within the Governance Group. Discussion at this meeting covered desire to get our asks into the party manifestos; noted that UK election will become more interesting for Scotland if SNP goes into coalition; and that sustainable development is our unifying theme. **Action: Andy and Governance Group**

4. Pursuing our Goals

The Environmental Narrative was explained – a one side of a4 hymnsheet of what we are about, to be a basis of dialogue with others, requires heads together and a communications person to translate. Volunteers requested: Matthew, Vicki (suggested in her absence), John T, Pete, as a core group to take things forward, involving a comms expert; after which all MBs will be consulted on the content. **Action: group to take forward**

Are we using memberships enough - building into plans? The recent meeting with Simon Pepper on the SNH corporate plan talked about the context we are in. Do TFs build mobilising of their memberships into their tactics? Can LINK help in any way? NB- the LINK Local work, being taken forward from Elizabeth Leighton's report's recommendations [Exploring Local Links](#), will assist; it is compiling a database of local groups interested in environmental issues (not comprehensive) for a one year trial. Meeting noted that in doing this it may be useful to ask local bodies their top 3 environmental issues too. The recent campaign on fracking is an example of benefits of a coordinated approach between local and national level groups. Community Councils have lost their umbrella body, and it is not possible to target them collectively, can LINK local gather contacts? SG keen to devolve powers to islands. Yes we must engage, as communities of interest with geographical communities. LINK's Land Reform Bill response also pertains, and the Community Empowerment Bill briefing.

Campaigning opportunities: From 1:1 meetings with members, several suggested we might usefully have a topline campaign each year. Thoughts were invited. Diarmid reported that the Agriculture TF seeks to reframe the debate away from subsidy to food, to influence the CAP in 2020. RSPB, Nourish, Soil Association and SAGS are a core of motivated organisations to lead, and others are willing to assist. Some discussion followed with no clear outcome: Sustainable Development, opportunity to reclaim it? Useful to have a framework that allows MBs to campaign together; National Performance Framework work, realising that business as usual is not an option. People are joining /supporting the Green party because it asks fundamental questions.

How our MBs interact with Development Plans – could get advice from Energy Savings Trust on energy perspectives.

Social justice and environmental justice – are they compatible? Could be worth having an internal look at where MBs stand on SJ issues, and what can be done with it if there is a fit between them. SWOT analysis. SNP committed to SJ and won't be able to deliver.

Revised UN Sustainable Development goals from September will start to dominate the rhetoric.

Defence of Natura Directives: ongoing through the Links federal approach, with high level of agreement across the UK. Developing a position statement internally for MBs to develop in their advocacy. Sharing diversity of approaches. Ian Jardine has been seconded from SNH for a year, and a small number of officials working on it. SG's thoughts not known, suggest we find out at Ministerial meeting. **Action: suggestion for a structured discussion at the April meeting as a precursor to any topline campaigning: What do we mean when we talk about sustainable development**

5. Updates from TFs, member bodies, Other

Economics seminar on 18 February: want to use it as an opportunity for MBs to bring their issues which bear on economic policy to the meeting. This should be useful to MBs and will help inform the Flourishing Scotland project to get some follow through on these issues.

Agriculture TF: Implementation of SRDP being delayed. ATF has accepted NFUS invitation to join their forum, as have some MBs. Will be in March at the earliest. Diarmid would be stepping down as convenor.

Land Use TF: meeting soon to discuss the advocacy strategy.

Freshwater TF: will be responding to the consultations on River Basin Management Plans.

Equal rights of appeal: PD is making good progress. The petition has survived, now with the Local Government Committee members recently changed. PD requesting examples of instances where equal right of appeal would have been beneficial. Cairngorm housing and Shetland wind farm are examples being used. PD conference on 25 April Planning – the People's Perspective.

Hilltracks: needs to regroup. Guidance will be out soon. NB: the Forest industry is angry at LINK for prior notification result of campaigning.

Land Reform group: LINK response to LRB consultation has gone to members in draft.

National Trust for Scotland: CEO Kate Mavor moving on, and Chair stepping down. Acting Chair identified.

RSPB: State of Nature report looked at which mechanisms did or did not work in Scotland. Conference on 4th Feb involving many from the Wildlife Forum.

Ramblers Scotland: new Scottish Director Jess Dolan starting Feb. RS embroiled with LL&TPA on camping bye-laws.

Scottish Environment Week: includes new aspect of drop-in sessions for which there may be slots still available - contact Rea.

6. Next network meeting

23 April, Perth

AW 3/2/15