



## **Note of the LINK Strategic Planning meeting held in Dunblane on 17 November 2015.**

**Attending** Helen Todd (RS, Chair, Land Group TFC, Hilltracks campaign co-convenor), Charles Dundas (WTS, Woodland Forum Convenor, Vice-Chair), Tim Ambrose (CC, Treasurer), John Thomson (SCNP, Landscape TFC), John Mayhew (APRS), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG, Landscape Depute TFC, Hilltracks co-convenor), Tom Leatherland (SWLG, Freshwater TFC), Sam Gardner (WWFS, Trustee), Chris Pollard (BES), Isabel Jones (BES), Mary Church (FoES, Governance Group), Matthew Crichton (FoES, Economics TFC), Diarmid Hearn (NTS), Deborah Long (Plantlife, Wildlife Forum TFC), Davie Black (PL), Polly Phillpot (PL), Sarah Robinson (RZSS), Vicki Swales (RSPB, Sustainable Land Use TFC), Sheila George (RSPB, Freshwater Depute TFC, SLU TF) Rea Cris (RSPB), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Denis Mollison (HWDT), Eddie Palmer (SB, Wildlife Crime TFC), Craig Macadam (Buglife, WF Depute TFC, Trustee), Lucy Graham (SWT, Trustee), Aedán Smith (RSPB, Planning TFC), Calum Duncan (MCS, Marine TFC), Ross Finnie (HF), Drennan Watson (HF). LINK staff - Alice Walsh, Andy Myles, Lisa Webb, Nick Underdown, Esther Brooker, Jen Anderson. Also Dafni Vlastari, incoming Advocacy Officer from January 2016; Bella Crowe, Nourish Scotland Intern working to ATF; Eleanor Harris, Buglife Intern working to WF.

**Apologies** from Froglife, BSCG, Charles Strang (APRS).

Members had been circulated with a proposal for restructuring LINK's task forces and a rationale driven by members' wish for better prioritization and aiming to be more cross-cutting and aligning overall effort more effectively, as raised in the Strategy refresh process, as the context for discussions.

### **1. Review of the year**

Organisational updates: Jen reported on the process of the Strategic Review to date. There had been a staff functions review and turnover of 3 staff since April (Hugh, Rea, Andy imminent), with job roles reviewed. Overall there is a few more days per month of core staff time, more time for admin, an emphasis on fundraising overview and better networking with other sectors. There is a clear need to protect staff and members time in delivery of the overall work programme.

#### **Evaluation**

A report on the previous 6 months efforts drawn mainly from TF convenors had been circulated. Key points were the very good level of member body participation and unanimous endorsement of the value of collective voice. Helen encouraged people to read and learn from it (weblink). LINK has achieved a lot. Energy is a big cross cutting issue. Last year we agreed to put effort to building consensus among members, having lost MCofS and JMT as members, it had become an elephant in the room. Simon Pepper and Elizabeth Leighton were commissioned to work with members and take sounding from externals. They have reported. The conclusion is that a LINK consensus would be a useful contribution and that we risk reputation damage in not doing that. The proposal is for a high level statement. The Board recommends LINK goes forward with more work, though this is up to member bodies to participate, as the cost is mainly MB time in participating in this process, the 9 in the core group and others, needed to move beyond an internal consensus. The meeting agreed it was worthwhile to push forward without losing momentum, looking to timescales of the Holyrood elections which the Landscape TF wants to use its statement (held back while this wider process continues), a ScotGov consultation on fracking, and the wider issue of energy being the key driver behind everything concerning the environment. There was recognition that this will take



considerable goodwill to get to a point of a useful externally focused product, and is also a great opportunity to align our work on food, landuse, agriculture, peatlands and more.

**Action: Commissioning group supported by staff to continue with the process.**

### Strategic Review Outcomes

The 4 page document circulated was the product of the process involving consultant Graeme Reeking conducting a survey of members, an survey of externals and one to one interviews, discussion at two board meetings and the August networking meeting, and further input by email from trustees. The aim was to sign it off today. Discussion covered a need to be more upfront about our concerns about Scotland's global footprint, and to include the agenda setting aim of LINK, rather than too much focus on the evidence base in our outcomes. If it is to be an internal document this is not so important as long as we have clear messages in our public facing work.

**Action: Jen to bring points back to GR to incorporate as he sees fit, and network to sign off by email.**

## 2. Looking Forward

### What is on the horizon for the environment, for Scotland, for LINK:

Andy talked to the issues within the [Political Strategy Report](#), circulated. He noted that this is a period of very rapid change, the PSR attempts to bring these issues down to earth. SNP dominance changed the political landscape. He asked members to think about how we connect to people at local government level. The Land Reform Bill team has been rebooted (Diarmid leading), and evidence gone in, will be working up amendments etc. The Lobbying Bill may go on the back burner as political will is low, but it must be watched. Fracking is on the agenda and it would be great to move to a deeper position on energy in relation to that consultation. Gaps - energy has been one, waste has been partly addressed through work on the Circular Economy. We address transport via Transform and Climate via SCCS, which member bodies should keep under review.

Environmental Justice – work is going well, consider how we move forward to test the law here, to challenge government and make legal tools more accessible to civil Scotland. We lack a civic forum, and getting the environment seriously considered within SCVO. If we had a civic forum it would be easier to find our allies and talk to the unpersuaded.

Westminster is increasing subsidies for fossil fuels. The Conservatives will be ripped apart by Europe. We need to use the same approach in the EU referendum as we did in the Indyref, not sit it out, to push our agenda. Our approach to indyref enhanced our reputation. The Joint Links are working strongly on Refit. The dominant paradigm has got hold of the Junker commission, TTIP is its major expression and Refit falls within that context. We can make real steps forward in addressing these drivers of environmental destruction. Revival of ideas on the circular economy, thinking on natural capital and ecosystem services and other mechanisms are immensely valuable as metaphors, SWT's work and others is very valuable here. Member bodies could pursue the circular economy as a way to change business peoples' minds.

**Action point:** Member body reps, especially those who are who are part of UK bodies, were reminded to discuss their positions on the EU before March, sharing the experience of Scotland on Indyref. The Governance Group will be taking plans forward, ideally with Joint Links colleagues.

**Public sector cuts and our response** suspect many of our agencies will shrink, relegating environment further down the line. We will struggle to get traction where welfare cuts and job creation are the dominant issues. Civil servants see cuts for the SRDP affecting our desired



outcomes. Cuts down the line will be more expensive later to redress. Spend to save does not resonate politically though we should still say it and work at cracking Sustainable Economic Growth versus Sustainable Development. Some optimism that spend on health has long term political support for preventative measures. Could the Economics TF add input to the Scottish Budget to its remit? NB.WWFS has given evidence on the budget for the last 5 years. SCCS has campaigned around the budget and Committees now have to mainstream theirs against climate targets. Planning reform is the spatial expression of this, we can make links more clearly in Planning TFs response to the current review.

Matthew thought we have to develop the resources and capacity in general, as no member will be advocating on the circular economy. We should recognize that and discuss what LINK can do, differentiating between what is an important issue for LINK, and not for individual member bodies. We will succeed when other parts of civil society start using our arguments because they see the synergy, so we need to think about how we articulate into different social movements. Being sharp and confident about the overall picture, we are not there yet.

Calum flagged the opportunity for synergies on marine planning, though networks loose and nebulous, and links between land use planning system, spatial implications of policies. John Mayhew noted the planning review is about building more houses, not sustainable development, that it is a real governance issue. The rhetoric from Scottish Government is as bad as that from Westminster. Deborah noted the opportunity to push for anything positive we want too, like national ecological networks.

Andy agreed with Johns analysis of the Planning review, advised that we get our criticisms in place on the process and substance, get a firm articulation of these, make sure the SNP know about them privately in the first instance, then go public later if needed.

### **Member body work**

Several MBs are making efforts to influence manifestos, there is a need for coordination. The next iteration of the LINK manifesto will be out soon, 6 steps to sustainability approach. WWF and APRS have produced manifesto asks. LINK's will help stitch it together with pointers for parties to go to members for further information. We may want to develop a more public facing document for Spring.

APRS: campaigning for a deposit return scheme for glass bottles with MCS, WWF, FoeS, RS supporting the campaign. Also working on national parks with tacit or explicit backing of other MBs.

FoES: Fracking will be major area for the next year and beyond, a public health study, additional work on decommissioning impacts, economic impacts, on traffic. Very much welcome other MBs input, FoES will pull together an outline of opportunities for this, ideally read for January. It is crucial to feed in at research and information phase before the public consultation. The Board and network agreed that LINK should respond. Andy asked each TF for one person to be part of a review team, with little response so far. The previous fracking briefing was powerful as it showed this was not just a FoES issue, and had wider back up.

RSPB: Protected Areas generally, SNH review of PAs, are pulling back, will fail to meet targets on site condition. RSPB will be pushing for as long as its necessary. Also food work, may have political traction when unions and health bodies etc are on board. Aiming for a Food Act possibly, also seeking to change public opinion on these issues, before next CAP in 2020. Wildlife Forum and RSPB response to the State of Nature report is pushing for a vision for nature over the next year or so. Also UK wide energy review, meeting human and biodiversity needs.



SAGS: will be following through on the Community Empowerment Act, on allotments, land for growing space for food. There will be secondary legislation. SAGs will work with local authorities and Scottish Government on best practice to get it all rolling. Hoping to contribute to food group and others.

MCS: working on better management for MPAs via Save Scottish Seas. The next round of consultations on SPAs and MPAs due before the year end. Also clean seas and beaches work, bottle campaign and fisheries management.

## Network Priorities Discussion

There was a proposal to set up a Social Justice TF, to respond to growing recognition of the need to align our agenda with the fairness agenda. The food focus is on the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice. Ramblers work is mostly about health, there are other MBs working on related issues. The linkages are obvious to us but not to others. Andy suggested developing the concept of environmental poverty as a priority over the next few months, as debates on land reform are ongoing there is an opportunity to reframe our issues. John Thomson agreed and noted the need to plug away at definition of communities from local communities (who often need to be appeased) to incorporate communities of interest, as both span the public interest.

There was discussion about how we can find a mechanism to embed fairness agenda into our work without creating a new group, or raising funds for greater capacity at the centre, as for economics. Having identified social justice as a priority last year we failed to get very far. It was agreed that we need to work out what to do on SJ and how. A meeting of the interested parties (on 17 December) would be convened by Vicki and Matthew. Andy would prepare a draft paper for the Fairer Scotland conversation beforehand.

It was broadly agreed that the proposed model of Groups with sub-groups feeding into one or more was a positive step forward, though it would not solve every problem. More thinking was needed especially on how the Land Group would work and how we fit in with broader coalitions on Food and Climate. We will need to have greater consistency on messages over the longer term if externals are to notice a difference with this model. This can be done by producing shareable resources for MBs own messaging. There are limits to what we can do as LINK without upsetting MBs sovereignty. We must ensure it means less rather than more work overall, and be clear where authority lies, at Group or Board level. There is potential for more flexibility to take advantage of opportunities, and better integration of effort by MBs across the LINK agenda. Mechanisms for informing people across work areas, leadership and capacity for cross cutting work, communication lines with coalitions, all need further thought. It was agreed to hold a meeting of all current TFs with an interest in the Land Group (On 14 January) to work out the priorities and mechanisms, resources and who will convene it. Deborah will chair this meeting.

**Actions: staff to organize dates for the two meetings (17 Dec Social Justice, 14 January Land).**

**All Group convenors were asked to bring 3 priority areas for their group to the Network meeting on 28 January, to be further whittled then.**

LINK Group convenors/deputes are:

Marine: Calum Duncan, Sarah Dolman

Planning: Aedán Smith, Clare Symonds

Governance: Lloyd Austin, Mary Church

Economics: Matthew Crighton, Bruce Wilson

Land: to be agreed.

Social Justice: to be agreed.



Joyce McMillan has a finite amount of time for her LINK role. A sub-group is tasked with making the best use of her time. She can help all groups communicate their messages. There has been a lot of good discussion on connectivity and alliances, how we might work with others, which will be revisited at January's meeting.

**Appendix** – Craig revised the Groups diagram to illustrate the idea of members at the core, subgroups feeding in to the groups, and all of it working towards our big priorities.

