

## **Note of the LINK Board meeting held by zoom 9-12 on 20 August 2020.**

Attending: Charles Dundas (Chair), Tim Ambrose (Treasurer), Mary Scott, Craig Macadam (Vice-Chair), Beryl Leatherland, Kevin Lelland, Lucy Graham (until item 4), Sam Gardner, Paul Walton, Clare Symonds, Alice Walsh (DO), Deborah Long (CO), Karen Paterson (FO).

Apologies: Helen Senn.

Charles welcomed everyone. Paul had some problems downloading the papers for it, and will discuss technicalities with Karen. It is helpful to have them online.

### **1. Minutes, Matters and Reports**

Minutes of the April 2020 meeting. These were approved.

Actions and Matters Arising (Paper B) – To note All actions were completed. KSB were approved as members and are active participants in the Wildlife, Green Recovery, Governance and Economics Groups.

Board Workshop report 1 – For information This was a reminder of the workshop in April on the first strategic objective, A Sustainable Scotland.

### **2. Budget and Financials (Paper C)**

Budget outturn to 31.06.2020 and Adjusted 5-year Projection (paper Ci) - To note

Tim summarised the financial position. For last year to March 2020 the financial statements have been drawn up by the auditors very satisfactorily. The narrative is in preparation for the statutory accounts for April 2019 to March 2020. The figures are all in line with the management accounts.

The first page of the spreadsheet covers the first quarter, including the additional Esmee Fairbairn Foundation grant for Covid. Tim noted that though we have taken a pessimistic view of membership subscriptions, and contacted members to advise them they could base their subscription on this year's projected income rather than last years, none of the Band 1 members have asked for a reduction, so there is no indication we will be 50% down on normal scheduled income. Government funding has been confirmed.

DPF Update – Spend to 31.06.2020 and 2020 – 2021 DPF – To note

The sum allocated to the DPF this year was £15k, now at £9,700 with no bids currently awaiting approval, so no particular pressure on it.

5 year outlook This is as expected, looking beyond EFF funding, of which we have allocated £20k into next year. It allows for some reductions in subscriptions. Karen has invoiced for £77k, and is waiting to hear from some members about purchase order numbers. Several members have mentioned problems next financial year. Many are saying they really value LINK and want to stay in the network. LINK is financially viable for the next 5 years, income

will be reduced without further EFF funding. We will start to eat into reserves in 2022-23. There is potential for further EFF funding, its new strategy is very positive for the environment. EFF supports the Links across the UK. We are in contact and have a good relationship with the grant manager. We will discuss further funding towards the end of this year. EFF plan to come to Scotland in relation to its strategy. We hope our planned marine event with the Environmental Funders Network on Marine funding might coincide. For this year's budget the Transport and Subsistence line will be reduced. Thanks to Karen for preparing the papers so well.

**Action: continue liaison with EFF on its strategy and further funding for LINK.**

### 3. Operations (Paper D)

Covid-19 update – To note  
Staffing and Board updates - To note  
Advocacy update and FFSN campaign – To note  
Membership: update – To note  
LINK Communications – to note  
Funding update – To note

Deborah summarised key points, largely for information.

Covid 19 update – there has been a lot of work going on supporting the members. Deborah has met Roseanna Cunningham and Fiona Hyslop, building on Green Recovery work and the issues of the impact of Covid on the sector, has been helpful. Members are continuing to use furlough, which has an impact on network capacity, and indications are that they will be using reserves, so the impact on the LINK subscription next year will likely be realised. Deborah has been speaking to funders at SNH, Govt, Heritage Lottery and Environmental Funders Network about the impact on members, and keeping them up to speed on the condition of the sector, which is very helpful.

LINK events are all online. The only one that may happen face to face is the Festive Reception, (with caveats). Feedback from the members on the August network meeting was positive, and a good geographical spread of members taking part.

Both LINK offices remain shut. We will be working out how staff will return, those who wish it. Deborah thanked the Employment Subgroup for support over this period.

Work plan 2020-21 Deborah has updated it. A lot of what was in it has been bumped by Covid. The pace of work is beginning to pick up now. We will revisit it at Strategic Planning on 11 November. These plans have fed into the Strategic Plan. The next step is to go through that with all the Groups.

Parliament returned, Vhairi has provided a summary. The Agriculture Bill is of concern. The Food and Farming Group is working on it, a public petition will follow.

The Green Recovery work is being done via a new group until December drawing membership across all groups. It will be disbanded when the work is embedded in the groups. It has been very useful for integration. Beryl noted that Helen Todd and John Mayhew will continue to be part of it.

Manifesto: Vhairi has done a fantastic job of integrating input from all LINK groups. The document is ready for Groups to use when talking to the parties, and we will have a more public facing version of it for January.

Internal Markets White Paper – we have put in a response through the Governance Group. The Nature COP 15 in China, May 2021, we are working with Environment Links UK on what we will be asking for. Craig, Paul, Calum and Deborah represent Scottish LINK. We have a joint bid with EFF to provide more capacity for that, and will be able to move quickly to increase hours internally when we hear.

Membership: We have lost two members. SCAPE due to lack of funds, though we are talking to Archaeology Scotland about their re-involvement. The Scottish Geodiversity Forum is reforming. We hope to welcome the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management as a member soon.

Communications: We have been talking up the value of nature along with member bodies. There are some good blogs. We are looking to coordinate more on comms with others, to cut through the noise around the Green Recovery.

Funding: We had put in a bid to the William Grant Foundation Step Change Fund to increase our campaigns and comms capacity, before that fund was withdrawn. We are looking at how we can build campaigning and comms capacity within the staff team. Esther going on maternity leave in October. Marine Conservation Society has provided funds to backfill the post until May, retaining much needed support for the Marine Group. Meanwhile we have applied to the John Ellerman Foundation. We plan an event with the Environmental Funders Network, based on the This is Scotland event we ran last October, highlighting the needs and opportunities for funding environmental work in Scotland. We want to do a parallel event, a mix of online and face to face, on marine, to get more funding into Scotland. We had a very positive meeting with the William Grant Foundation in July, and will hear in October if they can support us. We also had a positive meeting with the Friends Provident Foundation, which supports Phoebe's post, and agreed we will apply to extent that funding for at least a year.

### **Discussion points**

It is great to see continued efforts to square the communications and campaigning needs, which are strategically important to prioritise. We are looking at ways to retain Miriam's post, and move the campaign onto the manifesto.

We are inputting to the Programme for Government led by the Governance Group. We will issue a press release comparing the 11 asks we have in our Green Recovery briefing against what is in it, how we are matching up both these work areas.

Meetings with the Cabinet Secretaries were positive, not defensive, they are saying the right things, both say they recognise the importance of environment going forward, and are put that forward in Cabinet. The Govt response to the Higgins report is poor. We will write back to both of them with concerns on the level of 'green'. The nature element will be left behind. The hook is that despite the Higgins report itself being poor, it made reference to nature as a resource. We have the 5 tests. Only 5% of proposals address nature. That is where we will push.

The additional resource, if forthcoming from EFF, will not impact on other funding or applications. The post would be filled within the staff team.

Paul reported on the [Nature Recovery Plan](#), launched the earlier in the week with good support from other LINK members, coordinates quite well with the LINK manifesto. The manifesto is crucial. From conversations with Govt there is support for funding to be targeted through local authorities as in New Zealand. SNH is keen on that model. Should we be more ambitious in what we are asking for? On the Animal and Welfare Bill the opportunistic amendment forced Govt's hand to avoid defeat, and it has upset the 'sporting' wing Govt. RSPB had tried many time to get protection for the hare without success. The biodiversity side of Govt is looking to be quite ambitious, and does not have a loud voice.

Edinburgh Declaration: this is about the role of sub national govts in the delivery of the next round of targets and 2050 goals, output will be this Declaration. Around 75% of protected areas are administered by sub national govts. The text is really good, we did manage to get the role of NGOs in delivery recognised, in the preamble rather than the actions. A small victory, we can use it. It will be launched on 23 Sept, Roseanna Cunningham will be at that meeting. The purpose is that when it comes to the COP the First Minister can attend, say they are championing it and get a seat around the table. On 30 Sept there will be a meeting of govts. Scottish Govt wants to organise an online workshop around it. The language around the role of cities and local authorities and level of autonomy they are looking for from the UK Govt, may be useful later on. Paul can share a draft with trustees confidentially if they wish. **Action: contact Paul.**

Trustees approved the discretionary three days holiday additional allocation to staff between Christmas and New Year.

#### **4. Governance (Paper E)**

Lobbying register update – To note

Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland update – To note

Preparation for AGM – Action required

Future Board dates and themes – To note

Deborah covered key points. The ERCS is now in the transition period, looking for a chair and treasurer. The Legal Strategy Group is effectively the Board, and more trustees will be sought in line with the skills audit. ERCS has recruited two new staff posts, for admin support and an advocacy officer, to help with work around the Human Rights roundtable set up by Govt.

Preparation for the AGM. The table showing the rotation of trustees was discussed. Clare would not be standing for election as she will be on the ERCS Board. She had valued being part of the board, and learned a lot. Sam and Mary would each welcome being coopted for a further year. Tim would stand for re-election. Clare standing down leaves a space for an elected trustee from a member body.

The skills audit needed some updating from trustee. **Action: Trustees please contact Karen with updates.**

Charles invited observations of skills that were needed. These included:

- a strong background in communications and campaigning
  - gap on Equality and Diversity. Discussion followed about this being sector wide, a live issue for CEO discussions, not being tokenistic, value of drawing on expertise eg BEMIS, work ongoing in RSPB and JMT (Kevin leading so can feed into Deborah), value of additional strength of voice and credibility, difficulties given the timescale.
  - Preference for rep of a smaller NGO.
  - Tourism sector knowledge
  - Business sector knowledge

It was agreed to hold the AGM online, mid to late November, therefore a call to members will be circulated in September.

Next Board meeting on 22 October: This will be online, in two parts. A workshop session in the morning and a short board business meeting in the afternoon. The morning will focus on the third strategic objective and revisit the other two objectives as a business plan review. There will be at least one external, Nick Molho, CEO of the Aldersgate Group for the workshop.

**5. Workshop on A Strong Voice – noted separately.**

**6. AOB**

1. Deborah was invited in a personal capacity to sit on the selection panel for the new Environment Standards Scotland Board through till November. This is an interim Board to be in place until the Continuity Bill is concluded. The Board will be appointed by Ministers and independent, it won't have any statutory powers until the Bill is enacted. The panel will have two civil servants and two externals, Deborah and Malcolm Barrowclough, a law specialist. Trustees agreed this was a very positive development.

2. Note future meetings for diaries:

- NEXT BOARD 22 October: online.
- September: LINK crystal ball seminar 1
  - 11 November: strategic planning: online
  - TBC November: AGM online
  - 9 December: festive reception: Edinburgh.

Actions	Responsibility	Due date	Completion date
Liaise with EFF on its strategy and further funding	Alice / Deborah	December	
Complete Skills Audit	Trustees	By end August	



Notify members re trustee vacancy	Deborah / Karen	September	
Resolve Board papers technical issues for Paul.	Paul, Karen	Before October	
Progress Equality & Diversity strategy	Deborah with trustee input, Paul, Kevin	ongoing	