

Minutes of the LINK Board meeting held on 22 October 2020 by zoom.

Attending: Charles Dundas (Chair), Tim Ambrose (Treasurer), Clare Symonds, Beryl Leatherland, Kevin Lelland, Helen Senn, Craig Macadam, Sam Gardner, Paul Walton, Deborah Long CO, Karen Paterson FITO, Alice Walsh DO, Vhairi Tollan AM for one item.

Apologies: Mary Scott, Lucy Graham.

Summary of Actions

Actions	Responsibility	Due date	Completion date
Complete Skills Audit	Trustees	asap	
Annual report narrative to finalise, send to trustees and accountants	Deborah	asap	By AGM 11 November
Nominate UK Rep for EEB	Deborah	By 8 November	
Progress Equality & Diversity strategy	Deborah with trustee input, Paul, Kevin	ongoing	29 Sept: Initial discussions complete. Next steps identified
Liaise with EFF on its strategy and further funding	Alice / Deborah	ongoing	
Mary Scott to stand for election at AGM	Deborah/Mary	With AGM papers	11 November
Calendar invite to trustees for 2021 board meetings	Karen	asap	
Festive reception – short videos	Deborah/Lisa		9 December

1. Minutes, Matters and Reports

Minutes of August 2020 meeting (Paper A) These were approved, Clare proposed, seconded by Craig.

Actions and Matters Arising (Paper B)

The uncompleted items are all ongoing and included in the table above. Trustees were asked to complete the skills audit if they have not done it yet. The technical issues with the board papers were solved, having the links in both the word document and the email would continue. Paul thanked Karen for her help.

2. Budget and Financials (Paper C)

Budget outturn to 30.09.2020 and Adjusted 5-year Projection (paper Ci)

Income from membership subscriptions was better than initially expected, as most member bodies paid their subscriptions in full, clearly valuing the service they get. A downturn in subscriptions is expected across the next two years. Costs were down slightly because of Covid, leaving a surplus of £50k. We have decided to drawdown new William Grant Foundation funding in 2021 rather than this financial year. Members clearly value LINK. There was a slight increase in the IT line. Some upgrades were due for the desktop computers, accounted in the assets line, On the five year forecast the last line shows the balance, Where it is red the contingency fund is being drawn upon.

DPF Update – Spend to 30.09.2020 and 2020 – 2021 DPF

The remaining fund is £5k. We expect some competition among the groups for the remainder.

Update from Funding Subgroup

The September meeting agreed to include a donate button on the website.

Statutory accounts

The annual report narrative is near final and will go to the Board shortly and to the accountants.

3. Operations (Paper D)

Staffing and Board updates

The Advocacy Officer interviews would be held the following day.

Deborah drew trustees attention to the decisions made by the Board Employment Subgroup which met on 20 October, The three recommendations were approved, in line with the budget previously approved by the Board, salary increments, increase to the AM salary reflecting additional responsibilities, and increase to the Nature Recovery 2.5% increment to staff in post at 1 October, excluding the Marine maternity cover and new AO posts. Increases to Vhairi's and Juliet's salaries to reflect additional responsibilities were approved. Charles invited other trustees to join the ESG.

LINK Communications

Deborah explained these proposals built on evolving thinking within the staff team, and she sought trustees' perspectives at this early stage. FFSN campaign was going well, members like it and it helps get our voice into the media. To use this mechanism going forward we need capacity and expertise within the staff team. There were two strands. Miriam Ross's contract would end in March 2021. We want to find funding for her to continue and to widen her role out to cover campaigns across LINK. Secondly, managing communications currently sits between Deborah, Vhairi, Miriam and Juliet, which is less than optimal, so we want to investigate increasing capacity for this. Alice and Deborah were working to seek funding. Trustees unanimously agreed with the rationale. Discussion covered;

- Benefits of increasing the central campaign advice resource function is sensible and will also benefit smaller members,
- Inhouse expertise on making short videos would be great. It has been very good for RSPB;
- If you increase social media activity you need someone as full time as possible, and value too in connecting with member bodies social media people. LINK social media coverage is piecemeal at the moment.
- LINK media group exists but is inactive
- campaigning and comms skills are specialist and necessary.

Funding update

Kevin asked in relation to above if there was sufficient capacity for fundraising. Deborah and Charles considered Alice was getting good results.

Political Strategy Report (paper E)

Vhairi joined the call to speak to her paper. She flagged the priorities for the next 2-3 months are the Continuity Bill and the FFSN campaign, and taking forward actions on nature

recovery. Other issues will be important from 2021 – Human rights task force work for the next Parliament, the LINK manifesto, and public interaction on it. The next Governance Group meeting will discuss what LINK will do in the event of Indyref2.

The PSR report is an internal reference document can be shared within member bodies and will shortly be available on the members part of the website.

Paul flagged SGovt's wish to position itself as an international leader on biodiversity as well as climate, while rationalising targets for biodiversity are unnecessary as it is flourishing here.

A high level statement from the FM expected before Christmas. Paul, Craig Deborah and Vhairi would discuss tactics around LINK's exclusion from the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy process and related matters the following week. Vhairi noted from manifesto discussions that nature targets are slowing rising up opposition parties' agendas. From her participation in Roseanna Cunningham's cross party Sustainable Renewable Advisory Group, nature was mentioned but as an adjunct to climate. We have had better access to the Environment strategy process, though indications are that broad indicators such as 'area of new woodland' are favoured which would not discriminate between sitka and native. Deborah added that LINK's commissioned report on nature targets is another tool for us, which Vhairi is sharing with manifesto writers and officials. The nature networks film will have a soft launch on 27 October, followed up with a panel discussion at a later date. Trustees thanked Vhairi for her work and that of the Advocacy Team.

Deborah gave an update on our representation on the EEB Board. The five UK members of EEB can between them nominate one Board member, currently it is Lloyd Austin who was proposed by RSPB. RSPB would not be nominating again. It was agreed that for Scotland this is a priority, as Scottish Government are looking to keep pace with the EU on biodiversity and other issues. The Board agreed to nominate Lloyd Austin (if he is willing) as the UK rep for the next board meeting, with approval of the other members. This may involve some extra budget, as EEB expenses were capped at £300. Deborah will take this forward.

4. Governance (Paper F) Comments and questions were invited.

Preparation for AGM.

The call to members for trustee nominations went out and none were received. It was agreed to ask Mary Scott to stand for election which will release a co-opted for consideration at a later stage.

Future Board dates and themes

If Karen has not already sent a calendar invite to trustees she will do so.

Festive reception plans.

As obstacles to physical gatherings and travel was likely to continue it was agreed to take forward plans to have a celebratory online gathering instead. Trustees undertook to provide a very short video to celebrate something good that has happened over the year, which can later be shared on LINK's YouTube channel. Staff will provide guidance.

AOB. This was Clare's last board meeting. She has appreciated the opportunity of participating, Charles thanked Clare, all trustees and staff for their contributions.

Board meetings	Network meetings
28 th January	11 November: strategic planning and LINK AGM: online
28 th April	9 December festive celebration: online
26 th August	
21 st October	