Meeting Notes- Wildlife Group meeting 10th September (15:00am-17:00pm) via Zoom

Attendees- Juliet Caldwell (LINK), Arina Russell (Woodland Trust), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Deborah Long (LINK), Alistair Whyte (Plantlife), Suzie Saunders (Woodland Trust), Natalie Stevenson (Buglife), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG)

Chaired by – Alistair Whyte (Plantlife)

Apologies – Helen Taylor (RZSS), Darryl Cox (BBCT), Isobel Mercer (RSPB), Craig Macadam (Buglife), Katie O'Donnell (KSB), Paul Walton (RSPB), Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers), Nora Casey (RSPB), Kathy Wormald (Froglife)

Summary of Actions for 10th September Wildlife Group meeting

Action No.	Action	To be actioned by	Status
1.	Deborah to introduce Andy Ford to Bruce- regarding RLUPS and Nature Networks.	Deborah	September
2.	Juliet to email Nature Champions host members to suggest species/habitats and MSP Champions that could get involved in the '10 species to save the world' social media initiative marking COP25 virtual dates in October.	Juliet	September
3	Juliet to contact Craig and Paul about the WG involvement of the State of Nature partnership.	Juliet	September

1. General Updates

a. Acceptance of Previous Minutes & Review of Actions

Previous meeting minutes accepted, and actions updated.

b. Meetings Attended

- Beryl and Deborah attended a meeting regarding National Parks. Mentioned biodiversity issues, INNS, tree planting, transportation, re-introductions etc. With Andy Ford being promoted, will be useful for Nature Networks work.

- Arina noted the SNP conference happening at the weekend. There is a LINK/WTS event on Saturday about Saving Scotland's Rainforest. Jenni Minto is hosting this.
- Biodiversity Net Gain webinar on 6th September explored the terms 'Biodiversity Net Gain', 'Environmental Net Gain', 'Positive Effects for Biodiversity' and the similar sounding 'Nature Positive'. Presentations from Charlie at RSPB who talked about Nature Networks as an example of integrating nature into and onto development activities and how that can help deliver a nature positive future. Jason Reeves from CIEEM and Hannah Williams from WSP gave an overview of what biodiversity net gain is and environmental net gain. Report will be circulated to those attended and then available on the website.

2. LINK/SEPA Collaboration

a. Nature networks and River Basin Management Plan

- LINK have had a couple of meeting with SEPA, coordinated through Terry A'Hearn (SEPA CEO). He is keen to set up projects with LINK. We have offered 3. One of which is the potential for NN to be delivered alongside RBMP. LINK have outlined in one sentence that we think there is potential for NN for be dlivered through RBMP seeing as they are already set up. SEPA hadn't thought about that until we mentioned it. They are going into new consultation which the Freshwater Group will be responding to. SEPA are going away to think about it and then we need to get in touch with David Harley (SEPA) who leads on this.
- FG, PG and WG interested in this

b. Nature networks and Rural Land Use Partnerships

- LINK sits on one of the RLUPs pilots – Cairngorms. Bruce attends these group meetings. The SWT & LINK think that RLUPs are useful way to deliver on NN aspiration and the just transition elements. Advocate for them to channel agri-environmental funding through them so there is more join up with e.g., NGO work and biodiversity net gain. Both National Parks that are delivering pilots are doing well and already have a structure in place where they can work out how they can deliver RLUPS. Bruce has heard nothing from the borders or Aberdeenshire. They have received very little funding from the Scottish Government. The wording in the PfG is the government will only continue with them if they are successful post 2023. The government wants this to be a regional approach with local voices. What RLUPs need to do is what needs to change in land use to meet climate and nature targets. Bruce said they have discussed more about people and houses than they have climate or biodiversity. Bruce is meeting with the Scottish Government next week to raise some concerns. Bruce met with the Land Commissions to outline concerns and what we can do to help. The Land Use Strategy was underfunded and there is concern this will happen with RLUPs.
- Bruce spoke to Matthew Bird about what NNs looks like on the ground. RLUPs will take a long time to get off the ground and get moving. There may be a desire to move NN more quickly. However, we as LINK don't want to stall the NN process but if it would be stronger embedded in the RLUP approach it might be worth taking that small delay in time.
- Plantlife's new trustee Sally Thomas was instrumental in setting RLUPS up. Alistair suggested Bruce speaks to her.
- Question around whether there is there enough NGOs around the table at these meetings. Bruce made the offer that LINK and its members are available to attend, however RLUPs select their own boards themselves. Bruce will ask if we can have more NGO involvement.
- Arina noted that Scottish Forestry are running a regional strategic woodland creation project that covers Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders, East Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire. It seems to be a pilot in the South of Scotland. They might look to roll out that approach around Scotland. WTS have asked Rachael Hamilton to raise this as a PQ.

3. Update on biodiversity process

a. Post 2020 biodiversity delivery

- Deborah and Paul met with Nick Halfide and Claudia Rowse from NatureScot. Deborah met Cat Turton separately and then again with Kevin Quinlan from the Scottish Government. The meeting with NS was before the PfG came out. At all three meetings, LINK emphasised that we support target, and it has been good to see them tie into the Environment Strategy outcomes, but we need speed and corporation built into that. Cate and Kevin are fixated on a coherent policy structure, but they also want to build consensus. Deborah thinks they will come back to us soon with an outline plan. Deborah noted that we with every conversation we are reiterating that LINK is ready and waiting to get involved in this conversation and have demonstrated input from Still Delivering the Goods.
- Discussed the importance of the live projects list. It has proven its worth with the Nature Restoration Fund as we were able to lever more projects into that. NatureScot and Scottish Government know it exists. Deborah stressed that it is important to keep updating it.
- Arina noted that herself Paul, and Calum sit on the Scottish Government Biodiversity Stakeholder group. They haven't heard an update on another meeting.
- Arina is eager to have the SBS in place. Nature woodland creation targets have decreased by 1,000 hectares which is concerning. Arina thinks they might have made a mistake from the SNP-Green policy agreement. It does say it will update the target in the SBS and it will be evidence based.

- Bruce finding the lack of SBS frustrating. E.g., the beaver strategy. Doesn't make sense to not have the same process with Europe which is developing it in line with the international process. Bruce noticed that on the PfG on agriculture, they said they would mirror the European cap process as far as they can. However, they don't say anything like that on biodiversity.
- Alistair hoping to get an update on the plant strategy in the next few weeks.
- Arina noted that RSPB are taking Lorna Slater MSP out on Nature Champions visit to see Golden Eagles.
- LINK will be sending a letter to Lorna Slater in due course.

b. State of Nature Partnership

- Fiona Burns from RSPB contacted us to let us know they are hoping to put together a new State of Nature report and would like to hear initial thoughts on the why, what and when of the next report. They're organising a meeting sometime in the middle two weeks of October.
- Discussion around how the Wildlife Group can get involved.
- Craig Macadam as Convener of the Wildlife Group was closely involved as well as Paul Walton and Calum Duncan. There was the data crunching side of things as well as drafting chapters – which Craig, Paul and Calum were part of. Value from last report – came from sign up of agencies – Paul did a lot of behind the scenes
- Alistair noted that the Plantlife policy team contributed to the nitrogen information. WTS contributed to the woodland chapter. Paul got NatureScot to acknowledge the evidence base. Sally Thomas key to that process which Alistair has noted.

4. Update on targets work

30x30

- 30x30 paper published 28th July. LINK has a short summary of the paper for MSPs.

- Isobel, Vhairi, Paul and Vhairi met with Ben Ross (Head of Protected Areas). NatureScot meeting to discuss the LINK paper and what their current thinking is on 30x30. They are at an early stage of plans surrounding 30 by 30. They are working with the Scottish Government to start setting out the challenge and discussing the possible approached for delivery.
- Ben is keen for this to be a co-designed approach, with NGOS. We stressed that NGOs will be important delivery partners of 30x30. Expressed concern that we haven't been involved in the strategic thinking beyond a couple of workshops.
- The LINK group went through the LINK position and focused on what conditions would need to apply to land, as opposed to getting tied up in knots with the different designations. Ben expressed caution of using an existing system which he said was built on 'old thinking'. Highlighted that he's concerned protected areas were designated 40/50 years ago and the reasoning is outdated. He's questioning whether the means by which we protected those areas and whether that is the right approach. LINK agreed there are pitfalls of the existing system, but questioned whether you fix and improve the approach, or do you find a third way.
- RSPB are commissioning more research into this. In terms of mapping opportunities, NatureScot have been doing work with Space and Intelligence who is trying to develop opportunity mapping tools from satellite data. Hoping this will help narrow down what they can deliver for 30x30 and do on the ground.
- Ben is hoping to set up another Protected Areas Working Group soon.
- Hoping to have regular catch ups with Ben on the 30x30 process.
- **WCL published their 30x30 report yesterday which includes both land and sea.**

ELUK Targets Group

- A few members of the ELUK Targets group, including Juliet and Isobel, met with Bev Nichols who heads up the team which oversees many of JNCC's interactions with the 4 countries of the UK. Bev outlined key groups – the UK Biodiversity Framework group which work on the agreement of common way of working between 4 countries. The 30x30 group and how the 4 countries work jointly on that.
- Discussed how JNCC and other governments work with NGOs – they are working mainly with evidence (e.g., monitoring schemes) but on a policy level JNCC don't work directly with NGOs.
- ELUK group posed idea of roundtable with JNCC, stakeholders and agencies to discuss 30x30. Bev is keen to organise this and is also interested in having regular catch ups to work more with NGOs.
- ELUK targets group coming to a close 15th October. The target officers are putting together the report with the briefings on four strands – targets, monitoring, 30x30 and four country coordination. This will showcase the work of ELUK group and will be used in future advocacy work and on the run up to COP15 in April.
- ELUK Biennial Events - WCL hosted Nature event. Juliet and the 3 other target officers working on this project presented each theme. Juliet presented on 30x30. It went well and sounded like members found the working group useful.

5. Nature Champions

- 51 champions signed up and lots of site visits taking place.
- Juliet aiming to send a newsletter out to Champions from end of September/Start of October.
- Members to let Juliet know of any engagements with champions so she can update the activity log on the excel sheet.

- Juliet hoping to organise a short social media initiative over the virtual COP15 dates – 11th – 15th October. The idea is '10 species to save the world' - This idea would emphasise that every species and habitat within an ecosystem serves an important function. This is also an opportunity to highlight the importance of nature in tackling the climate crisis – on the run up to COP26. 10 MSP Nature Champions will be provided with materials about how their species or habitat is important to maintain ecosystem function etc. which they can share on social media. They'll be encouraged to take a short video talking about the importance of their species/habitat recognising the work/projects that is already going into conserving and protecting them – via host members.
- Suggested to frame this around nature based solutions.

6. AOB