

Note of outcomes of LINK Strategic Planning meeting held on zoom 14 December 2002.

Groups reports back. *Top 3 priorities for action, overlaps with other groups, name check other group overlaps.*

Land Use, Reform, Landscape Group: Diarmid Hearn reported.

1. Land Use Strategy, though worthwhile, there is the continual struggle to get traction with Government. To help overcome this we need to consider how LINK itself can take forward the land use strategy, perhaps by **organising a workshop**, and to promote it when meeting the Minister.

The Group will respond to the consultation on the Land Reform Bill. One of the proposals is for a complaint system relating to land use decisions. That will be based on the protocols which at the moment are focused on landownership, less than land use itself. If there was a protocol relating to land use decisions around climate change and nature recovery, that may allow a complaint to be raised with the new body/agency.

Work more with the Land Use Commission itself, as the font for new ideas about land reform, has a strong voice with Government. We should work better with it on issues of common interest.

The consultation on National Parks will come, we will respond to one on criteria , and in summer a consultation is expected on proposals for new sites. LINK probably does not have a role in naming sites, but we need to discuss it. If Govt does not use secondary legislation, and the primary legislation opens up we need to ensure other issues do not creep in.

The group needs to consider what to do on Landscape further, though agreed to **check if there are specific asks** for the Natural Environment Bill.

Sustainable Economics Group: Matthew Crighton reported.

Circular Economy, priority to advocate on the bill. There are a number of issues. Outwith the Bill Scottish Govt has plenty of powers they can use, in particular we want to develop arguments around extended producer responsibility, which could be quite radical, and helpful.

Just Transition – is becoming a big deal for sectors outside the energy sector. SGovt is preparing plans for every sector and region. Could be a plan for every sector. After the energy strategy, the first three starting to be prepared include one on Food and Farming. Within JT we need to (a) advocate that CE principles and biodiversity are integrated into JT thinking and practice. Suggest that the **Food and Farming Group** could help with that one.

Continuing advocacy around nature positive economy; working up the key motors that will lead to a more nature positive economy, that needs advocacy into the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and other economic and fiscal processes. Incidentally SCCS and STUC are advocating Scottish Govt makes better use of its fiscal powers, so our issues need to be part of that conversation.

There was no time to discuss sustainable finance or green skills, which are in the workplans, which will need to be discussed at the Group. The Biodiversity Strategy mentions creating a green investment plan, will be discussed at the next meeting. Wildlife Group will need to be involved.

Woodlands: Alan McDonnell reported.

Emphasis on making the case for natural regeneration to form a bigger part of attaining woodland expansion targets. And productive native woods, would like to build a better economic case, which will be putting in a bid to the DPF, eg comparing the costs of installing and maintaining fencing to deliver truly biodiverse woods, rather than one off funding for fencing and short term regeneration, versus larger scale deer management, and which is better for productive woodland.

The Forestry Grant Scheme review will be the biggest focus next year, will influence a number of groups. Woodlands need to reach out to other groups to bring more capacity in. Combating greenwash, which commercial forestry has a tendency to do. We saw that at the UKFS. The balance of funding in the grant scheme will be **important for other groups' priorities**, so it would be good to bring more energy and capacity into this. We expect to be disappointed about the UKFS standard when it comes out. It is a long game, there is a lot of energy in some of the community interest groups, it would be more politically effective to make a wider social and environmental alliance that will be more effective with this Govt. Common ground when discussing these issues around the UKFS.

Deer: Alan McDonnell reported.

The Natural Environment Bill, ensuring the recommendations of the Deer Working Group go in there completely, or better, so looking for that bill will make the foundation for sustainable landscape scale deer management. Links back to the Woodland and Wildlife groups. Also on Land Reform, see potential in the land rights and responsibility statement and for land management plans to have explicit ties to the deer management aims. Nature Scot are talking about this now. We want to see the Deer asks get into the Programme for Government, thinking of the scale of change needed, rather than piecemeal. First draft in January there will be a report about deer in the Atlantic rain forest, will come to the Deer group to do advocacy on it, as the alliance cannot do that. The issues in it will be applicable across Scotland.

Food and Farming. Andrew Stark reported.

Influencing the future of rural policy towards environmental public goods, with three foci, influence the Agriculture Reform implementation oversight Board, its structure and membership of it. Govt will be focussing on different tiers of the policy framework, so the Group will need to get into the detail. The Group will need to develop policy positions across the whole of the policy framework, eg whole farm plans, agro-forestry. Also support the Farm for Scotland's Future campaign with good stories and farm visits. As the Agriculture bill develops there will be pre-legislative scrutiny. In early 2023 the RAINE committee will be taking evidence, we will input and use the forthcoming Ellie Brodie report.

Key bits of legislation, the Organic Stakeholder Group linking around the local food strategy. Focus on EIA legislation, particularly the agriculture bit, which the Group has worked on, and agri and forestry hooks for the Natural Environment bill, along with other groups.

Pathways to sustainable farming though broadening and deepening support in Parliament for the transition; what we mean and how we get there. Working with Farming 1.5, and inputting to the development of the Govt's food plan, the Good Food Nation process, and a LINK position on what a food plan would look like, and the agriculture section in the revised Climate Change plan. The F&F Group will meet in early January to go through plans.

Governance. Lloyd Austin reported.

Top 3 are: the Governance and Environmental Court consultation taking place in the first half of 2023, a requirement of the Continuity Act, that we had included. The key thing is to create a debate before the consultation so that something meaningful ensues, which we will need to push.

The Human Rights Bill and commitment to a right to a Healthy Environment, including substantive issues. LINK and ERCS have held a workshop and will do more. Equally procedural rights link to Aarhus Convention, and the Environmental Court, and join up with above.

Thirdly preparations in case of Indy Ref 2 if it comes, we plans around the Referendum Challenge document and process, are on back burner until needed. Member bodies are commissioning work to inform themselves, not for external use at moment. Members are keen not to support either outcome, to prepare for a challenge to both sides.

Other areas include responding to any more Brexit issues from UK Govt. Lloyd encouraged other groups to consider what they might get out of the Governance & Environmental Courts consultation, The prospect of establishment of a Court, where any environmental issue could be raised, could also challenge deficiencies by public bodies.

The Group is also able to advise on governance issues for other groups. In discussion with Wildlife on nature targets, and on the Circular Economy, where the consultation held suggestions of a new body to replace Zero Waste Scotland.

Future Generations commission, is in slow lane, but may be given some promotion by Sarah Boyack's member bill published today, and which LINK should collectively look at, responding will be important. With two such linked proposals, there is potential for cross party working, so may be positive from our viewpoint.

There is a consultation on the National Performance Framework, outcomes. There are discussions in Govt around the Future Generations Commission, linking to the Sustainable Development Goals, and the NPF outcomes. Deborah sits on the NPF outcome Board and keeping convenors informed of developments, meeting next in January. It is a **cross LINK issue needing coordination across several groups.**

Planning Group. Esme Clelland reported.

First priority is influencing the delivery of NPF4, expecting to be approved and adopted early in 2023. Actions will be responding to consultations on guidance and delivery mechanisms for it over the next year. Key will be approach to biodiversity net gain through development guidance, monitoring how NPF4 links to other Govt strategies, and keeping an eye on Nature Networks, engaging with NatureScot and Govt on it.

Second headline influencing the Natural Environment bill and identifying what legislative changes missing from NPF4 that could be brought forward through it.

Third is the Land Use strategy and Regional Land Use partnerships, raised earlier by Diarmid. **The Planning and Land Use groups can organise a workshop**, also continue to press Govt on regional land use strategies.

Biodiversity net gain webinar report, led by Wildlife group here:

<https://www.scotlink.org/publication/biodiversity-net-gain-webinar-report/>

Wildlife Group. Alistair Whyte reported.

Most of the discussion were cross cutting over groups.

T3 priorities are the Natural Environment bill, the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the 5 year Delivery plan, and Funding.

Priority on the Bill is to secure outcomes for wildlife on legislatively binding targets, and look at other opportunities to deliver for biodiversity, potentially something around INNS, non-native conifers and game birds, and broad principles around INNS. There may be room to look at the statutory function of NS and whether it is fit for purpose to address the nature crisis, the bill could be a mechanism. Wildlife could help the Food and Farming group with detail on conditional payments, to make them effective for wildlife outcomes. Also may be useful to look at aquaculture with the Marine group, and Freshwater group, should we doing something there under the NE bill?

Clarify whether there is an opportunity to make any final changes to the SBS draft, and will want to influence the first 5 year Delivery plan and how become more closely involved in the drafting.

Funding, specifically natural capital accounting, ecosystem services, biodiversity net gain. Is there a role for the Group in ensuring that all these approaches are delivering properly and genuinely for biodiversity restoration, maybe pull together best practice, recommendations to take forward new approaches to valuing wildlife that are meaningful.

Member body updates.

NTS: we have a new ten-year strategy with ambitious/challenging targets for membership growth, improving heritage assets, and becoming carbon negative; a Plan for Nature is in development for nature recovery at all relevant NTS sites; in terms of advocacy, we expect marine will be a particular focus.

APRS: Kat Jones delighted to be part of LINK. Three projects are on the go. Deposit return scheme, deferred until 23 August 2023, determined to make Govt stick to this date for implementation. Greenbelts projects, succeeded in getting something into the NPF4 draft, and want to keep it there and build on it. National Park commitment in the Bute House agreement, will be very much involved in the future stages of consultations and implementation.

SCNP: business focussed on the consultation on the new National Park, also continuing to engage with the other two NPs. Pleased with the shape of the new Cairngorms park plan which is in right direction.

WTS: top 3 priorities for 2023: FGS review consultation (this will have a public campaign launching in January); developing what a good support mechanism for integrating trees on farms looks like, joint work with Soil Association; Pleased with protection for ancient woodland and ancient trees, only the starting point, need to sure local authorities are resourced to implement the changes, will look to support through initiatives. National Planning Framework 4 implementation incl. piloting training for 3 local authorities and updating our planner's manual for ancient woods and trees. Also Living Legends campaign - <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/campaign-with-us/tree-protection-campaign/>

ERCS: past year focus on a Human right to a Healthy Environment into Scot's law, full compliance with the Aarhus Convention, and removing prohibitive costs, advocating for establishment of an environmental court, and positive eco developments and standards. Did a full evaluation of Scotland's contribution on Aarhus, Govt is to be summoned by the Committee to explain the gaps in compliance, and lack of access to justice. Did joint briefing on lack of Equal Rights of Appeal breaching the Convention, and have a representation being considered by the Convention, some success in getting exemptions on court fees. Influencing Environment Standards Scotland, remit and monitoring. Continuing petition for Environmental Court. Will be continuing with response to the HR bill, holding a workshop for LINK members, continuing work to increase access to justice and reduce legal expenses, and Parliamentary launch for a report on the pros of an Environmental Court.

Plantlife; New strategy for next year. Focus will be on species rich grassland, Atlantic rainforest and species recovery. Will have projects on the ground advisory work and feeding through into advocacy.

Ramblers; next year is 20th anniversary of the Land Reform Act is a theme, celebrating rights and highlighting the benefits for health, economy etc. Highlighting inequality of access, some work on EDI agenda and will have event in Parliament, extending equality of access. The additional money Govt allocated to visitor management during Covid has been massively useful, expect it will be discontinued, so thinking about how the resource can be maintained. Also ramping up messaging on responsible access aimed at young adults.

Trees for Life; Building the rewilding centre in Glenmoriston, opens in the spring, connections past and future between people and nature. Continue to work on reintroductions and co-existence and attendant difficulties, in particular and riparian grant scheme. Lynx conversations. Trees, building on remnants, taking the emphasis off replanting onto natural regeneration. How natural capital can incentivise.

RSPB. UK Attack on Nature campaign, collaborated with others, being a bit more outspoken, continuing advocacy on that. Working with WWF and National Trust on the UK Peoples Plan for Nature, national conversation took place with 30,000 ideas contributed, plan coming out next year. Organisation has reviewed advocacy and campaigning functioning, strengthening England team, relationship across UK, and aiming to be more propositional. In Scotland in terms of 23-26 delivery plan, lot of priorities, and how to take advantage of the current Govt make up, grouse shooting, agriculture bill, pushing on nature positive seas, compensations from offshore wind, reducing impact of the bird flu on seabird populations, and delivering big landscape scale restoration, and implementing EDI plans.

Keep Scotland Beautiful. Climate change and nature work, litter, waste and improving places where people live, continuing this work.

CIEEM; green jobs for nature, partnership project for all to use, <https://greenjobsfornature.org/> build on increasing diversity in the sector. Focus on training and member network events. Policy wise, a lot coming up, and NPF4 in particular.

FoES; Focussed on issues around climate change, taking on the oil & gas sector, countering the greenwash, and techno solutions in SGovt narrative. COP, and Just Transition work with trade unions and others, divestment, transport issues, Circular Economy and waste, opposing need for more incinerators.

Honorary Fellows were invited to speak. Roger Crofts wearing Royal Society of Edinburgh hat, it is setting up a working group on the environment, will go forward, has a lot to contribute from academia and policy.

Stuart Housden is on the board of the National Heritage Memorial Fund Scotland, which has £20m a year to disburse. It would be great to see good solid partnership bids coming in new year, biodiversity and community engagement, Species on the Edge a great example, funding is fantastic news for 37 threatened species across Scottish coasts, the communities they live alongside and amongst, and a partnership of eNGOs and NatureScot. There is money, it is an easier decision process up to £0.25m, above that it goes to competitive tendering with the Committee. Keen to see more good solid bids.

Summing Up: Deborah thanked everyone for coming and contributing so well. There are quite a few asks for the Natural Environment Bill and many have said you will get back. Dan has set a deadline of end of January, so please send your thoughts to him before that.

Working more effectively with others is a strategic objective, so please keep raising these. We already work with WEALL, Scottish Land Commission, Farming 1.5, and Forestry community networks were mentioned. There is a long list of cross group integrations on green finance, NPF, NPF4, LUS and Ref Challenge. Illustrates well how these issues are reaching right across the network to make sure we are not duplicating, or have any gaps.

Next Steps: all the breakout groups were very small, so need to take plans back to the groups as soon as possible. In early January she will be pulling together the key priorities from the summaries into an Operations Plan, to be shared as soon as drafted. There are capacity issues in all groups of which we are conscious. She underlined that the Governance group is there to advise where needed, a resource. She will collate and cross check all the work plans, pull out any duplication and where groups need to work together, and will alert you so it is ready early in the new year. Please go through these in next group meeting. We will convene and review again at the Spring networking meeting.

She gave massive thanks to Rachael for all the work in the background today. There will be a note, taken by Alice.

AW 14/12/2022.

