



## DRAFT MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD 18 APRIL 2013 AT FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, EDINBURGH

### PRESENT

Trustees Deborah Long (Chair), Helen Todd (Vice Chair), Lloyd Austin, Simon Jones, Beryl Leatherland, Mandy Orr  
In attendance Ross Finnie (President)  
Jen Anderson, Alice Walsh, Andy Myles, Hugh Green – LINK Staff

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from trustees Paul Ritchie, Ian Findlay, Mike Robinson and Angus Yarwood.

### 2. MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY MEETING (PAPER 2)

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 17 January were approved for accuracy.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING AND OTHER REPORTS

3.1. Marine project & staffing - JA provided further update to the paper circulated. The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation had recently postponed their decision on the Links' application for further funding, by a further 2 months. JA and MTF's steering group had therefore assessed finances identifying sufficient likely underspend on the current phase of funding and other contributions that meant LINK could extend the staff contracts by 3 months to early November. Staff had been informed of this development. In the meantime, the steering group was exploring whether EFF required further information in support of Scottish LINK's bid for extension funds.

3.2 Strategic liaison with SNH now and ahead – DL flagged the proposal in the circulated paper, that LINK should invite some SNH board members to lunch and discussion at the 15 August network meeting. LINK trustees agreed this would be useful esp. if targeted at board members of SNH not familiar with LINK and if separated from the network's own discussions. The meeting noted that some senior staff of SNH might also attend. WRT SNH's government team, LINK would make every effort to encourage these players to come to Congress in November, instead.

**Actions: Jen to contact Andrew Bachell. Alice to pursue Congress invitees.**

3.3. Review of accountants, services and fees - The Board noted the plan to do this review between now and June, with a recommendation to the Board in August and the AGM in November, and to effect any changeover which might result, by early January, giving a successor company a full quarter to get to know our systems ahead of the year-end process in April 2014. **Action: Hugh, Jen & Paul**

3.4 Alliance building with business - The meeting noted that letters had been sent to the various networks, seeking dialogue. A further proposal was discussed, that LINK organise two or three forums with businesses over the coming year as a way of building on the desire for 'shared space' (to emerge from Congress 2012). Trustees advised this should be linked to LINK's rolling-out of a business affiliation and to its longer term thinking about business species champions. Also that LINK should seek advice from Scottish Business in the Community on approaches and likely costs. Breakfasts were noted as good times for the business audience. The aim would be to develop our credibility, put LINK on the radar of businesses. Some businesses among our current targets for the business affiliation could be invited to host one of the forums, sharing the costs with LINK (which would otherwise come out of our core budget). Clarity around a theme/agenda/product was advised so those businesses invited saw the potential benefit of attending. **Actions: Jen progress planning; Alice & Andy to discuss with Pagoda PR.**

3.5 Board succession - An updated skills audit was tabled in addition to the paper circulated. DL asked trustees to consider current skills in relation to likely gaps from November, and people in the network or beyond who could fill these gaps, and to keep in touch with herself or Jen. Angus would stand down this autumn and either Lloyd or Deborah (by rotation); assuming that no other trustees resigned, and alongside the existing vacant place on the Board, there would be 3 vacancies for elected trustees come November. The meeting noted FoES (eg Mary Church) and Frances McCartney in relation to environmental law/governance needs; also that Diarmid Hearn and Craig McAdam might be willing to join the board in the wake of discussions last year. **Action: Trustee views invited for early June**

3.6 European advisory role – The meeting approved the proposal for Jonny Hughes to be LINK’s European Adviser in the role of ‘shepherd’, keeping an eye on this area for LINK, flagging opportunities to the network and board, on occasion representing LINK. This kind of role was useful to LINK, might be extended to others who could look after issues in future and keep LINK connected to wider arenas.

### 3.7 Other strategic liaison

Andy would pursue EEB for a date for a joint meeting (*JA note – poss. Jan 2014 earliest*). **Action: Andy**  
 Alice would continue to pursue SEPA for a date for a boards-level liaison meeting. **Action: Alice**  
 Meetings with FoES, CNPA and WWFS t.b.a. **Action: Jen**  
 Note & follow-up to ASDA meeting. **Action: Jen**

## 4. FINANCIAL

4.1. Budget outturn to 31.3.13 – Hugh reported that Morris and Young (LINK’s accountants) had confirmed complete accuracy on his 2012/13 figures that week. Finances were in good shape with a £10k higher surplus in unrestricted than had been forecast, as a result of receiving 100% of SNH’s grant after all, also better full cost recovery, and recovery of some unspent discretionary funding from projects. The deficit in restricted funding related to spend-out of some of the funding for the marine project. A number of projects were now closed making for a clean year-end (a few were carried forward as necessary), and the total funds balance was over £190k, including the agreed contingency for a wind-up scenario. Jen and Hugh proposed re-allocation of the £2k saved from the year’s DPFs back into the DPF for 2013/14, which would make the new fund £12k; Paul supported the proposal; the Board now approved the proposal. Hugh confirmed, to Simon Jones, that monitoring of the spending of DPF allocations tends to be the responsibility of the project manager, generally goes well.

4.2 Revised forecast to 31.2.13 – HG reported the bottom line was a forecast of a slight deficit in unrestricted funds; however the overall impact of starting the year with larger reserves was that the forecast for the end for 2013/14 placed LINK £9k better than originally budgeted. Subscription income had been adjusted in the knowledge that HWDT would drop a band; there could be further such changes. Receipt of the full SNH grant had been restored in the forecast, thanks to Alice’s negotiations with SNH to ensure full grant-aid. The discretionary fund reflected the £2k rise (assumed by staff and covered above). The salary line included additional spend for extra hours on fundraising (Alice was currently putting in extra time to develop the agreed pipeline). A slight deficit under restricted funds was anticipated with spend-out of phase 2 of marine funding. LINK should end 2013/14 in good shape. Projects (page 3) were at this stage as predicted by JA and HG though would develop as the year progressed. LINK would need to find new sponsors for SEW to replace HS and Calor. The 5-year budget forecast had been revised with 2012/13’s actual figures, and, taking all the assumptions in terms of income on board (including the Board’s anticipation of a 20% year on year reduction in SNH and SG grants in coming years) LINK would begin to make deficits from 2014/15, but would have sufficient funding to carry on into 2017/18. Trustees endorsed LINK’s 5-year scenario as a good way to plan ahead and know where to place effort, albeit with the hope that the ‘potential extinction’ date would continue to move into the future, also. Simon Jones suggested that a couple of line graphs could give helpful visual illustration of the future picture. The meeting thanked Hugh for very good papers and clarity about risks. **Action: Hugh to include graphs**

#### 4.3 Discretionary project fund : first tranche of bids for 2013/14

The Fund stood at £12,000. 3 bids had been received, totalling £5,000, including hill tracks, wildlife seminar and costs of the proposed feasibility study outlined in paper 5.7.

Helen Todd spoke to the bid from the Hilltracks Subgroup of the Landscape and Planning TFs, whose aim was to provide evidence to persuade the Minister of the case LINK had made for hilltracks to be withdrawn from the General Permitted Development Order. The meeting supported this bid, with the following provisos: work could usefully illustrate the cumulative effect over say 10 years; work should consider how it might address the forestry concerns which had led to SG's recent decision not to withdraw tracks from the GDPO; if Scottish Mountaineering Trust decided not to offer funding, work be scaled back or the funding gap filled by the interested members; the product (a PDF) should be shareable over social media. The meeting noted that Mountaineering Council of Scotland (which had resigned in 2012 from LINK) was involved in the work, though their re-joining was not anticipated simply on the strength of this one collaboration.

Deborah Long spoke to the Wildlife Forum bid for support with a joint seminar with Royal Society of Edinburgh; the aim was to create political space, via more than the usual suspects, for Government to do something more for biodiversity. Invitees covered an important spectrum and the Minister had been approached. The hope was to engage people in debate, move biodiversity out of its usual box in decision makers' minds. Total ask was £950 including consultant fee for 3 days' work and travel. The meeting approved this bid also.

### 5. STRATEGIC PLAN

#### 5.1 Revised strategic plan

JA introduced the revised and reduced version which reflected key actions in the corporate strategy in the context of LINK's KPIs. In revising this, she and Deborah had identified some important new KPIs. Deborah indicated that she and Jen would complete the linkages between strategic and network plans and KPI reporting arrangements, circulating the final proposals to the Board for sign-off in May, and thereafter using the strategic plan at board discussions. The meeting indicated that the revised plan was going very much in the right direction. **Action: Jen and Deborah**

The new KPIs were noted and it was agreed to change KPI 13 to read "55% of essential costs" to reflect the pace indicated in the 5-year budget projection. The strategic ambition was for membership income to represent 50-60% of these costs and it was agreed that discussion by the FSG of how to progress towards that goal would be useful. **Action: FSG discussion**

#### 5.2 Network plan

The meeting saw quarter 4's report on 2012/13's work plan as well as the full forward 2013/14 plan and discussed the following points.

Economics work – It was hoped that FoES' Chair might take a lead/shepherding role; this was a subject for discussion at a meeting which had been proposed with FoES. **Action: Deborah, Jen, Andy**

DG Environment meetings – These are useful and LINK should field players. Staff would find out how often these take place and ensure relevant TFs (at least Wildlife Forum and Environmental Governance group, if not others) are encouraged to field players to each meeting in future. **Action: Staff**

Congress 2013 - Alice tabled a paper summarising members' and hon fellows' strong response to her recent call for themes. Of those which had been proposed, the Board recommended that 2013's event should focus on Environment and the Public including Communities, looking at how people in Scotland might take more responsibility for the environment, what community is. This should give scope for treatment of how to address perceptions of protected areas and how the national community sells the idea to local communities. The LINK Land Group submission provided a good case study. The behaviour

change issue should not be a focus, though some treatment would be useful of Calum's suggestion that the public who indicate their 'liking/support' for the environment should be encouraged to consider how that might pan out in personal activity. The meeting agreed that Congress should not address the constitutional referendum in 2014 to avoid that becoming the main point of reference and being seen by others to be the purpose; however, it was felt that Environment and Public as a theme could include reference to LINK's challenge document and the value of knowing how environment will fare under the different political scenarios. Ross felt the campaigns' answers may be that Scotland needs to wait for the next general election for visions of how environment will fare; also, that LINK may have a role in tempering expectations around that particular debate. Drennan's suggestion of product would be considered by the steering group, which might revert to the Board for DPF funding. Simon Jones and Mandy Orr offered to join a congress steering group which Alice thought Simon Pepper might be willing to support too. **Action: Steering Group**

Referendum strategy - It was agreed that LINK should organise opportunities to profile environment and SD needs ahead of the 2014 referendum, including hustings. **Action: future network discussion**

5.3 KPI monitoring plan – Revised proforma to circulate. See 5.1 above. **Action: Jen**

#### 5.4 PSR

Andy spoke to the spring PSR, flagging key areas for comment.

The meeting supported his proposal that LINK be involved and active around the amendment to the Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Bill.

It was agreed that the discussion within LINK around future forestry governance needed to progress apace and dialogue with SG be arranged soon, and the Governance Group was tasked with taking arrangements forward and pulling in others in LINK who wished to be involved. The conflict of interest around FCS and Scottish Government's possibly different agendas for forestry governance was noted.

The meeting noted growing concerns around deer management and agreed this merited discussion between Deer and other TFs. Andy would coordinate this in liaison with the DTF convenor. It was understood that the DTF too, was keen on wider LINK engagement in its work.

The Board supported the need for positioning by LINK on fracking and unconventional gas, coordinated through a task and finish group. This would also be discussed at the network meeting.

The meeting supported the proposal for a further letter to the campaigns (shortly) to seek acknowledgement of LINK's challenge document and request for feedback, followed by a press release at the time of the anniversary of publication of the document (June).

**Actions: Andy to coordinate forward movement on the above**

5.5 Fundraising strategy report – Jen spoke to the progress report which had been circulated. This indicated that a lot of time had been invested by several trustees (Mandy, Angus, Mike) and staff, since January, to address objectives which the Board had set out last October. Alice was now working additional hours to develop the 'pipeline'; trustee time and engagement would be sought for meetings (to be organised) with trusts; an FSG-led discussion of where and how 'full cost recovery' should be applied in LINK's typical circumstances would be arranged to inform that part of the strategy. Jen thanked all involved for their time. Deborah echoed thanks to all concerned and particularly Mandy Orr. **Actions: FSG to confirm FCR arrangements. Alice and Mandy to develop fundraising pipeline.**

#### 5.6 Business affiliation proposal

Hugh spoke to the revised proposal which had been developed by himself, Alice, Jen, Nick and Andy. This took on board feedback from trustees including Mandy's extensive commentary. The result was revisions to the overall package and the promotions strategy which was more nuanced, with specific

targets. Staff now sought Board support for the initiative to be rolled out as indicated, tied, as discussed above, to wider plans for dialogue with business. The meeting gave approval for this.

DL reported Angus Yarwood's suggestions of 'suitability vetting' of businesses, in advance. The meeting however felt vetting should be based mainly on instincts of staff on whether given businesses are suitable or unsuitable targets; broadly, this 'tick-box' would be around whether the business has aims sympathetic to LINK's and the discussions would be about when to agree to disagree. This was considered sufficient, particularly if LINK's literature and discussions with potential affiliates stress that the initiative is an affiliation to encourage understanding on both sides, not an endorsement by either side of each other, and that it continues to be all right for either side to sometimes have objections to particular things that the other may do, even if an affiliation is active.

WRT LINK's lawyer's advice that, ultimately, LINK's memo and articles would need to be amended, the Board agreed that LINK should run a one-year pilot under the current articles (wording as advised by the lawyer). The development would be on the basis of existing relationships, building on these, having conversations about who we are and why it makes sense to be part of that, forums and other initiatives we plan which may be of interest. If the initiative were productive, LINK should then move to formalise 'business supporters' in the M&A after that first year.

**Action: Staff to proceed with initiative. Board to review from summer 2014.**

5.7 Proposal for feasibility study into need for provision of local / community group hub - Andy spoke to his paper making the case for a study into extending LINK's links into local communities and bridging potential gaps in our linkages. From staff discussions he said it was clear there was a lot to be bottomed out and the proposal was to hire consultancy help to do this. That work would include talking to other alliances about whether and how and avoiding overlaps, as well as talking to LINK members about potential impacts of a hub in terms of demand on their organisations. £2,000 was sought from the DPF. The meeting approved the proposal and the funding. **Action: Staff let project over summer 2013**

## 6. AOB

6.1 – Banding for Organisational Supporters The meeting approved staff's proposal to apply same thresholds & bandings as proposed for business supporter to the existing organisational supporter package, in future. **Actions: Hugh and Alice**

6.2 – Circulation of papers for board meetings The board reviewed how best to receive papers. Trustees confirmed a preference for electronic rather than hard copy. It was agreed to persevere with Huddle which offered good security. Staff would ensure clearer labelling in regard to printing of papers (so that papers which are not A4, or are landscape not portrait, are clearly flagged as such. Staff would ensure an absolute minimum of 3 full working days' notice on all papers for each meeting. **Actions: Staff**

6.3 – NGO landowner group Helen Todd reported that the group's study, to which LINK had allocated DPF funding last quarter and on which she sat for LINK, was being revised for submission shortly to the SG's Land Reform Review Group. At its recent workshop, attended by Alison Elliot of the LRRG, Helen flagged LINK's forthcoming submission and Alison had looked forward to receiving LINK views.

## 7. NEXT BOARD MEETING

15 August, morning Board, Lunch & Discussion with SNH board members (tbc), then Networking meeting. Venue to be confirmed