

DRAFT MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD 17 JANUARY 2013 AT LINK OFFICE PERTH

PRESENT

Trustees Deborah Long (Chair), Helen Todd (Vice Chair), Paul Ritchie (Treasurer), Lloyd Austin, Simon Jones, Beryl Leatherland, Mandy Orr, Mike Robinson, Angus Yarwood

In attendance Jen Anderson, Alice Walsh, Andy Myles – LINK Staff

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

DL reported on replies from Eila Macqueen and Jonny Hughes to her own email of thanks to them on standing down in 2012. Jonny indicated that he was keen to work with LINK / remain appended to the Board and the position needed to be clarified with him.

DL welcomed new trustees Beryl and Simon (elected) and Mandy, who along with Mike Robinson, the Board would now co-opt. She offered the following thoughts on trustee roles:

- Flagging the legal outline of trustee roles and responsibilities set out in our induction pack and specially the protocols for board membership. Remembering, importantly, that trustees are there as LINK, to lead LINK. That means they leave all our other hats at the door and do not represent own organisations' interests at LINK Board but do what's best for LINK, the network.
- When representing LINK, as all do from time to time, trustees represent the entire network of 30+ organisations, which can be tricky. LINK was working particularly hard at the moment to educate Government so they understand and comply with LINK's democratic standards, so LINK trustees need to make sure when at such tables that everyone else understands that they represent LINK. JA was updating LINK guidance with a new protocol on accepting invitations to represent the network.
- Trustees need to maintain a high level of impartiality in their LINK roles.
- LINK was likely to be tested in the next 2 years with the independence debate shedding heat on constitutional process in Scotland. LINK, as a Scottish charity could not and must not be politically partisan. The agreed LINK line – that structures in Scotland, whatever they are or become through the democratic process, must deliver for Scotland's environment - was outlined in LINK's paper at <http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PositionPapers/LINKPaperProtectEnvTimeOfCut.pdf> which DL encouraged trustees to re-read to acquaint themselves with the issues and the LINK stance.
- For all trustees there were two declarations which they would be asked to sign and leave with staff today (these were circulated).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Ian Findlay (Trustee), Ross Finnie (President), Hugh Green (Finance Officer).

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS FROM THE OCTOBER MEETING (PAPER 2)

2.1 The draft minutes were approved for accuracy.

2.2 It was agreed that ABM should pursue his invitation to Elizabeth Heister EEB to attend a LINK networking meeting, possible in April. **Action: ABM**



3. FINANCIAL

3.1. Budget outturn to 31.12.12 & revised forecast to 31.2.13 (Paper 3.1)

JA spoke to the paper prepared by Hugh Green reporting that, wrt. the outturn to end December, LINK was in good financial form with a slightly higher surplus than budgetted. Several members had moved up a subscription band raising membership income; the draw on core funds for Congress costs had been lower than anticipated. It was likely that not all of SNH's grant could be draw-able owing to how SNH calculates this, though staff would explore this further with SNH. LINK had lost CES as sub tenants in December, (moved to larger premises) and the space was being advertised to members as per business strategy. HG and JA had revised the forecast for the year as a whole, with some modest rises and reductions but no major changes. The Board was satisfied with the reports. MO asked if LINK includes the cost of voluntary time in its SNH grant reports; staff indicated that this is considerable and is represented clearly in our annual report and understood as part of the SNH-LINK relationship.

3.2 Draft budget for 2013/14

There had been no opportunity to prepare this for the Board. JA and HG would work on the draft and circulate it to trustees by email for comment within the next couple of weeks. It would conform to LINK's revised business strategy. **Action: JA, HG**

JA reminded trustees of LINK's 5-year financial scenario which had been revised last autumn to reflect new business strategy. The point at which some traditional sources would decline was from 2014/15. Given the uncertainties around future funding, strategy was to bring income and expenditure gradually down over 5 years, flat-lining costs as much as possible, developing a new fundraising strategy, holding our ground with central government about our anticipation that they will fund our civic and intermediary roles, seeking FCR on all projects and developing corporate support as a larger component of income. The 5-year scenario would be circulated with the draft budget. **Action: JA**

3.3 Discretionary Project Fund status review (Paper 3.1, page 5)

The Board noted the balance of £1001. LWA confirmed that the allocation of DPF to legal governance work was still to be spent on visits Frances McCartney (lawyer) would make on LINK's behalf over coming months. JA was aware of a possible LTF/PTF bid to gather evidence to support LINK's case on hill tracks, though this would not happen during the current financial year. Since no other bids had been received it was agreed to pay the Landowning Group its second allocation of £1k and to close the 2012/13 DPF cleanly. The draft budget for 2013/14 would include a proposed new DPF - this being one of LINK's commitments to EFF for its core support, something that appeals generally to funders, and a fund which trustees felt important to maintain to support collective work. TFs would be encouraged to think ahead and bring bids to the Board for April. **Action: HG, JA/DL**

It was noted that the DPF is available mainly for LINK's TFs and Forums, though on occasion the Board has drawn on it for work which will benefit the network as a whole. Bids are invited several times a year, with FSG recommendations on these then going to full Board for approval.

DL outlined the roles of the Funding Subgroup and indicated that any offers to join the group would be welcome.

3.4 Fundraising strategy

AY reported on a meeting between Mandy Orr, himself, and staff the previous week. Ahead of preparing new fundraising strategy to tackle the projected reduction in income discussion had covered:

- current income streams and their status in the coming years and the projected funding gap we need to fill to maintain existing levels of activity (ie., gap of £60k in 2014/15, £100k in 2015/16 and beyond);
- how we pitch LINK to potential funders and what our USP is;
- what the new fundraising strategy needs to include;
- a new HLF fundraising capacity building programme; and
- constraints in FR resources and in-house expertise.

The Funding Subgroup would meet in early February to review the case for support for LINK with a 360 degree assessment of LINK benefits and work. This should provide a clear solid base for the draft strategy; the case for support would state our USP, include key statements, achievements and positive messages about LINK. The strategy would set out existing and potential income streams with a statement on income streams to be prioritised and developed - ie., membership, trusts, organisational supporter category, business affiliate, etc. It would also identify activities that we need to contract out to a professional fundraiser, and work activities for which we want to recruit short term paid resource or voluntary/intern support. It was intended that the strategy would be completed for the spring. The group had identified that a key piece of work to contract out would be researching and devising a detailed funding "pipeline" for the next three years. The "pipeline" spreadsheet would map out all potential income and approaches, with an assessment of likelihood of success, and detail the areas of LINK's work that approaches should include in order to meet application criteria. This would provide a work plan for the Board and Development Officer.

The meeting welcomed the report and looked forward to further update. In response to SJ's question on the thrust of the revised strategy MO indicated that this would be to rework and re-present the outcomes of LINK's core activity and its relevance to broader Scottish themes which resonate with funders. MO also observed that conferences such as SWT's in early Feb, initiatives such as Year of Natural Scotland, and meetings like the one coming up with ASDA staff, were all soft targets for fundraising effort. The FSG would bring a draft strategy back to the Board in April. **Action: Funding Subgroup**

Noting LINK's proposed development of a business supporter category as, in part, fundraising strategy, the meeting agreed that LINK should try to pilot the category with a number of 'warm' business contacts (eg existing relationships, new contacts made via Congress 2012, ASDA), ahead of any launch of the affiliation, using testimonies as part of the launch strategy. It was agreed to develop a corporate engagement strategy, in tandem with the overall fundraising strategy, for the April board. **Action: Staff**

3.5 ASDA / CORPORATES

WRT LINK's meeting with ASDA's head of sustainability in early February, and members' own contacts with the company, it was noted that NGO positions on palm oil should be borne in mind and this opportunity approached with caution, ensuring ASDA grasps LINK's mission and entire operations, and flagging current relevant issues. **Action: DL/JA**

Angus reported that he was compiling a report on NGO strategies for engaging with corporates and invited other members to provide data. **Action: Trustees**

4. STRATEGIC PLAN

4.1 Revised strategic plan

DL introduced the paper indicating that it was 'work in progress' responding to the board's request for a more strategic document (than the operating plan) and easier-to-read reporting system. The strategic plan covered a 3-year period, sat above the network plan, and was intended for Board scrutiny more than for network consumption though would be available for reference on members' webpages. It captured strategic actions from the network's refreshed corporate strategy with a view to tracking progress on these and to LINK's KPIs. Trustees agreed that the draft was heading in the right direction, suggesting that a traffic light system would be helpful in future. DL and JA reported that a subgroup would meet to refine this and KMP monitoring proposals bringing a final version to April's board. **Action: Subgroup, JA**

4.2 Relationship of strategic plan to network plan

The meeting noted that the network plan (a reduced version of the erstwhile operating plan) captures planned work at the level of TFs, forums and projects (eg SEW, Congress) annually, and shows progress against these each quarter. It aims to inform member bodies and TFs/Forums about work afoot, the

potential for duplication, the draw on staff time and DPF funds, the need/opportunity for integration. It also provides content for reports as needed on network achievements. The meeting agreed that this needs to continue to be available to the Board as it gives an important overview of work in progress; also that staff should continue to flag where there were issues at network plan level which need board discussion, in board papers.

The value of these plans vs. time invested in their development and maintenance was discussed; while they agreed that the documents and process should be streamlined as much as possible to avoid unnecessary use of time, trustees confirmed the need for both levels of planning, access to these, and the value of the plans as a historical record of LINK activity. The possibility of some of the routine gathering of data for the reports online was again noted and staff would review this. **Action: staff**

4.3 Taking forward high-level actions emerging from LINK's 2012 work

The Board considered the paper circulated. This summarised outcomes of LINK's 2012 Congress around developing dialogue with business, alongside other current strategic ambitions including building common cause across civic Scotland on our economics and governance agendas, and developing more robust environmental narrative to win key arguments at the political level. The issue in taking these forward was one of capacity – at board, member and staff levels. The following points emerged:

- LINK can explore Lottery 'Investing in Ideas' funding wrt. both developing space for wider dialogue with business and for its idea of creating a hub for local and community groups. This fund offers opportunity for scoping work too. Whilst the local hub project is about our vertical links there is scope to include that proposal in seeking funding for wider (horizontal) relationships.
- LINK could invite businesses that want to engage more in dialogue to provide time and £s towards shared space as part of their CSR.
- LINK should identify other forums involving business to which to take messages, extending our reach.
- LINK should choose appropriate scale of action from low level (Facebook, Linked-In) and more intensive approaches (representation on boards, TF approaches).
- The 2020 group is not a conduit to provision of shared space, having a different agenda to ours; ours is about improving relations and comms across Scotland.
- We need to develop existing liaison and networking with SCDI, FSB, CBIS, SBIC, IoD and others, and highlight this ambition to generate more networking in real civic Scotland at our governance conference.

The meeting agreed that given the real lack of capacity, funding is needed to take forward these ambitions. The various recent mappings of civic Scotland would be updated and dovetailed and the ambition assessed in our review of fundraising strategy. Those aspirations less easy to fund would then be prioritised in other ways by the Board. Meantime at board level we would pursue with Ross's help priority targets amongst the business networks. **Action: FSG, staff, April Board**

ABM offered to develop his vertical/horizontal mapping to inform that next step. **Action: ABM for April**

5. REPORTS BACK

5.1 IUCN NC UK position statement

The meeting confirmed LINK's support for the IUCN UK's recent statement and staff would inform Jonny Hughes and Stuart Brooks (LINK's IUCN advisor and rep) so that they could feed this information into IUCN. **Action: staff**

5.2 Land Reform Review – LINK workshop

The meeting hoped the workshop would address long term issues, benefits of NGO landownership and the diversity in which NGOs have a key role. **Action: staff**



6. AOB

6.1 SOAs

With the recent announcement of the next round of SOAs and in the absence of an active LINK TF on local governance Helen Todd reported that LINK would be writing to the LAs reminding them of LINK's work to date, its watchdog role, members' topline environmental issues for treatment within SOAs, and a copy of our manifesto *Acting Locally*. **Action: HT, staff**

6.2 Angus Yarwood moving on

AY would leave WTS at end March to move to Switzerland. He was willing to continue on LINK's board till November and could attend 2 of the next 3 meetings. He was also able to contribute to development of the fundraising strategy. He proposed to ask WTS to continue to provide a convenor for the Woodland TF as there were no other offers from TF members. WTS would be recruiting for a replacement Government Affairs Manager. On the Board's behalf DL welcomed Angus's offer.

6.3 LINK rolling manifesto refresh

ABM reported that starting early February LINK's rolling manifesto would be reviewed, refreshed, gaps filled, and asks updated. This was on the agenda for discussion with the network in the afternoon.

6.4 Meetings with new / changing member staff

It was agreed to add to the list of board level liaison a meeting with Lang Banks new Director of WWFS. Staff would organise an induction meeting with Janice Fenny, now taking over representation of Sustrans on LINK. **Actions: staff**

7. NEXT BOARD MEETING

18 April 2013, 10:15, LINK office in Perth.

JA/LINK/Jan 2013