



## Minutes of LINK Board meeting held 21 April 2011 at the LINK office, Shore Road, Perth

### PRESENT

Trustees: Deborah Long (Chair), Paul Ritchie (Treasurer), Helen Todd, Ian Findlay, Andrew Fairbairn, Jonny Hughes

In attendance: Jen Anderson, Hugh Green, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh (Staff)

### 1. APOLOGIES

Received from Dan Barlow (Vice Chair), Lloyd Austin, Eila Macqueen, Helen Zealley (President).

### 2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING ON 27 January 2011

Approved for accuracy subject to one change at 3.3 which action to read 'LINK to proactively seek meeting with Susan Davies, Kenneth Fowler and Andrew Bachell from April'.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 NTS W.r.t. contact with Sir Kenneth Calman Lloyd advised pursuing Kate Mavor and Terry Levinthal first, inviting Kenneth Calman to receptions/Congress etc; Dan's email supported this suggesting LINK could contact Robin Harper (now on NTS Board) as an avenue to approach Kenneth Calman in future. The meeting agreed, advising staff to add NTS's new policy director to lists, when appointed.

**Action: Staff, Eila Macqueen, Deborah**

3.3.1 SNH The meeting discussed developments since LINK's useful discussion with Kenneth Fowler SNH. This was to be followed up by an opportunity for Kenneth Fowler to address and discuss SNH's position with LINK as soon as possible (June networking, see below). TFs would be asked to contact SNH's programme managers to introduce themselves and their work and where contact was not already ongoing to suggest and introductory meeting.

**Action: Staff to K Fowler, Staff to TFCs**

SNH's proposed grant conditions now included one requesting that LINK would '*avoid making statements which undermined SNH or its corporate profile*'. Jonny Hughes had discussed with Susan Davies very recently and reported that SNH seemed resolute. Colin Liddell had advised LINK that the policy of public bodies was now going in this direction. The meeting felt that the two previous proposed conditions anyway provided for greater dialogue with LINK in advance of press work and publications citing or relating to SNH. Board and senior staff had significant concern both at the absence of trust implied by the condition and the potential for differing interpretation by various players in LINK and SNH over time. Given the risks to LINK's independence, after some discussion, the meeting agreed LINK must take a robust stance on behalf of members and as a first step seek to explore the issues with Andrew Thin on 3 May. As a last resort, if necessary, the meeting agreed that LINK would seek alternative wording which referred only to 'SNH's work', either replaced 'profile' with 'identity' or left this clause out altogether, and included 'vice versa' at the end of the sentence to ensure reciprocity. The meeting felt the spirit of the clause was not likely to be supported by Scottish Government. *JA note: Deborah has noted a suggestion since the Board's discussion that, should Andrew Thin not be moved to instruct SNH to drop this request, LINK should consider seeking discussion of the proposed clause with new Ministers after the election.*

**Action: LINK to write Kenneth Fowler asking to raise at 3 May meeting**

3.3.2 SEPA – The 1 June meeting would consider election outcomes and implications for the environment and SEPA's roles, and a possible Environmental Regulation Bill which an earlier meeting between the two organisations on 25 May would inform. Dan Barlow would lead in planning for the June meeting for LINK, with Jonny Hughes, Chris Revie, Deborah Long, Helen Zealley and Alice Walsh attending.

3.6 Broadening LINK's connections – The meeting agreed to pursue action agreed in January with Mike Robinson, Deborah Long and Andy Myles bringing a paper to the June meeting.

**Action: Andy Myles to lead**

3.7 LINK strategic review – Dan and Lloyd had emailed support and suggestions and the meeting signed off the brief for the work which would take place during 2011 to inform a refreshed strategy from 2012 to 2015. The forward budget had £3k towards the review of LINK impact, and staff and trustees would carry out the internal assessment of members as regards LINK's effectiveness as a forum. A sub group of Andy Fairbairn, Deborah Long would advise staff.

**Action: Jen to circulate previous brief and proposed new questions to subgroup for comment.**

#### 4. FINANCIALS

##### 4.1 Budget outturn to 31.3.11 – end of year

Hugh Green spoke to the paper circulated, confident that Morris and Young's check (the following week) would confirm accuracy of the figures shown. The situation was much as forecast last quarter, with the bottom line even healthier than forecast then – a total of almost £55k in unrestricted funds balance, in addition to reserves. RZSS's non-payment of subscription had reduced income by almost £8k though that loss had been netted out by project cost recovery and organisational supporter income. Expenditure had been kept under tight control and was under forecast by 2%, resulting in the largest surplus LINK had made of almost £30k. Most projects were closing with just marine, SLU, agriculture and biodiversity funding carried forward for work which was continuing into 2011/12. Hugh drew trustee's attention to the line in yellow analysing cost recovery where projects had outside (restricted) funding. The DPF of £15k for 2010/11 had been fully allocated. The meeting was impressed, heard that funder clawback would not be an issue, though noted that having larger surpluses can be a disadvantage to fundraising from trusts.

**Action: Hugh to circulate the accounts during May, once checked by Morris and Young**

##### 4.2 Funding and response team update

The meeting noted that further EFF funding was very uncertain and Government funding had to be re-negotiated. LINK had met with Gannochy Trust which might offer modest funding, staff would test other funding channels as fundraising time allowed and ensure that organisations participating in SEW helped meet its total costs. On subscriptions, RZSS's membership had lapsed, WWT wished to remain in LINK, MCoS was officially reviewing its earlier decision to pull out and other organisations had not flagged problems in relation to 2011/12 subscriptions at this stage. The response team advised LINK proceed with caution into 2011/12, pending news on EFF and/or 'new' funders; whilst the position for 2011/12 was comfortable enough, this would diminish fast in coming years if traditional funding streams ceased and new funding was hard to secure and LINK must plan to manage that scenario.

The meeting agreed at this stage to assume that network independence remained an operating principle and an objective of LINK's funding. On this basis the response team/FSG meeting on 8 June would

- brainstorm sources in relation to LINK services and work including the commercial world (eg via opening OS up to the commercial sector)
- decide whether to use some reserve to commission additional fundraising support from a consultant (through IoF)
- explore anew any support which SEFF could provide LINK and on what terms
- consider whether the proposed 1% rise to subscriptions would be sufficient

The June Board would allow time for detailed discussion of the response team's views on the strategic points of how LINK might address any gaps in its funding including via commercial sector, how consultancy could help, whether our independence remains critical and how that limits us.

**Action: Staff; Response Team workshop; June Board**

##### 4.3 Draft Budget for 2011/12

Hugh reported that staff had reviewed the forecast once again in the light of the 2010/11 outturn and what was known about the year ahead; the subscription forecast was slightly up and the salary line was slightly down given the current gap in staff level caused by Susan Guest's resignation. Staff proposed a modest



allocation of £5k to DPF to allow this important support to go ahead: if allocated this would result in a small but manageable deficit. Deborah invited views from round the table; the consensus was that this modest allocation mattered a lot in terms of benefits which DPF can bring for members' collective work and the job of attracting further funding; however, the business case for any bids from TFs would each still be subject to review by the Board and any further DPF funding in the medium term would need more discussion.

**Action: Draft budget for 2011/12 adopted as above**

#### 5. 2011 AGM

The necessary preparations for the 30 August AGM were outlined in the paper circulated, many in hand.

W.r.t. recruitment, once trustees had identified skills gaps members would be encouraged to nominate. Jen tabled a version of the skills audit suggesting the Board look ahead a few years to when longer serving trustees would retire and to skills needs/gaps which would need to be addressed on the Board. Given shortage of time for discussion Jen was asked to add Helen Todd's details, highlight areas which needed assessment and where LINK might need to focus recruitment. Ian Findlay indicated that after a number of years on the board he would be willing to stand down if others were to come forward with similar skills to his.

**Action: Jen to Trustees for their response, prior to encouraging members to nominate**

W.r.t. LINK's proposed accountants, Paul Ritchie proposed that LINK follow good practice in putting this out to tender and market testing providers. The meeting agreed LINK should do this during 2011, with a view to recommending a preferred accountancy firm by early 2012.

**Action: Paul would support staff in carrying out this review**

#### 6. CARBON ACCOUNTING

6.1 LINK draft carbon report for 2010/11 The meeting considered Hugh's draft report, noting trends. A measure for waste available soon from Scottish Government and LINK would apply this. Targets for future years were to minimise private car travel and increase video conferencing in place of some face-to-face meetings requiring travel. The Board thanked Hugh for a very useful document agreeing the finalised version should go on LINK's public website and that members should be circulated with a copy/link and encouragement to move in this direction themselves, given the emissions savings and cost savings involved.

**Action: Hugh, Kate MacColl**

6.2 LINK survey of member body carbon accounting progress The meeting discussed Hugh's circulated report with recommendations on the survey he had carried out over the last six months and agreed that having the report was important, encouraging members to take action was priority, and that the network should try not to circulate the report too widely (a degree of unavoidable risk was noted). Agreed actions were for –

- Hugh to set up email group as recommended, during summer, and see if energy emerges from amongst participants to continue to run the forum;
- Hugh to run workshop during 2011 with those who expressed interest, also open to other members;
- Hugh to circulate survey report (subject to amendments noted) to members with workshop agenda, marked 'internal report for members' information not wider circulation' (other than to their CEOs);
- LINK to survey members every 2 years circulating resulting report to them to encourage action; this would require either staff-time allocation or commissioned consultancy; and
- LINK to investigate Carbon or Energy Savings Trusts grant-aid to support this work.

**Action: Hugh, staff**

#### 7. OPERATIONS

7.1 Spring 2011 political strategy report The Board briefly discussed the questions posed and:

- approved the proposal for a refresh of LINK's manifesto during summer 2011;
- agreed to call a Networking meeting in late May/early June to assess the likely impact of the election and new administration on LINK's plans;
- was satisfied that LINK could speedily react to election outcomes on the basis of current drafts and plans (Andy planned to write new Ministers, new MSPs, new Committee Convenors but shorter term the governance draft was prepared and LINK was clear about priority policy areas to pursue);



- confirmed support for members' plans for going forward in relation to Local Councils to maintain momentum and a watchdog role as well as perform an important service to members; this would rely on support from staff in terms of coordination and political input, though not in ways which would exceed capacity; the TF were considering exploring support via secondment or funds raised;
- advised that the autumn PSR would usefully cover -
  - o further action in terms of any Spending Review updating LINK's budget paper and the position in its Christie Commission submission (future of public service delivery);
  - o the future of sustainable development; and
  - o likely impact of new administration on the environment and SD.

7.2 Draft governance paper The meeting noted that the draft was with the network for comment by 5 May and had also been circulated in confidence to a few external players for their views on its relevance and interest to wider civic society. The draft incorporated input from Dan Barlow and Lloyd Austin and, though lengthy, addressed areas important to LINK. The Board thanked Andy for a very good paper, concurring with his view that LINK should look to develop thinking in tandem with other interests and encourage sectors of the policy community into open dialogue about these issues.

**Action: Trustees to comment in detail to Andy, tracking changes, for 5 May deadline**

7.3 Quarter 4 report on 2010/11 operating plan The report had been circulated to trustees for their information in advance of the meeting. Relevant (red) issues had been covered in the discussion above.

7.4 Draft operating plan for 2011/12 The meeting ran through the plan for 2011/12 which captured aspirations from November's strategic planning meeting as well as detailed plans submitted by TFs. The Board confirmed support for the proposals, subject to discussion with members at the afternoon's networking meeting.

7.5 Congress 2011 themes, steering group Themes proposed were:

- Reclaiming SD/revaluing the coinage;
- Resource efficiency (current EU discussion);
- Smart settlements (making connection to urban, social, health, including carbon, biodiversity, climate, consumption – not specifically about greenspace);
- Consequences of latest renewables targets for Scotland, local democracy and LINK

**Action: These would be flagged / amplified at the afternoon's Networking meeting and a steering group identified soon to take forward the planning (to which Jonny Hughes offered time).**

## 8. AOB

Froglife's application for membership of LINK The Board confirmed support for the application which had been circulated in early April. Kate MacColl would contact members with this Board recommendation.

**Action: Kate MacColl to contact members**

## 9. NEXT MEETING

The next **Board meeting was rescheduled to 28 June**. The meeting would be held in the **afternoon** at a venue to be confirmed nearer the time.

The June **networking meeting was rescheduled to 3 June** and all reps, task forces would be invited. This would be an all-day meeting to assess the election outcomes for impact on LINK plans and strategies and would include in the morning, the presentation from and discussion with Kenneth Fowler SNH (subject to his availability).

The previous date of 21 June would now be dropped from LINK's calendar.