



MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD 26 APRIL 2012 AT THE LINK OFFICE IN PERTH

Present

Trustees Deborah Long (Chair), Eila Macqueen (Vice Chair), Paul Ritchie (Treasurer), Helen Todd, Angus Yarwood, Lloyd Austin, Ian Findlay and Mike Robinson

In attendance Ross Finnie, President
Diarmid Hearn, Observer
Jen Anderson, Alice Walsh, Andy Myles – LINK Staff

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Jonny Hughes (trustee) and Hugh Green (Finance Officer).

2. MINUTES, MATTERS ARISING & OTHER REPORTS

2.1 Draft minutes

These were approved for accuracy.

2.1 AGM preparation

- EM's contact, with fundraising skills, was interested in joining LINK's Board. **Action: EM to pass details to LINK for further comms in advance of the AGM**

- EM and JH would stand down in November. This fulfilled the constitutional need for rotation; would leave 4 elected places or 2 elected places and 2 places free for co-opted trustees. The meeting noted that Deborah and Jen were thinking further ahead including to changeover of office bearers. **Action: DL, JA**

2.3 Summit outcomes – DL reported. February summit with agencies and others had allowed good discussion on environment in age of prudence; a summary of key points had subsequently circulated for comment and for highlighting of priorities for action. Once all had responded, DL's intention was to circulate the note round the Board. Priority issues were (as outlined in board papers) getting alternatives to GDP, strengthening narrative on environment, work on CAP pillar 1. LINK would explore with the participants how they wanted to progress the actions. The value of the NGO voice had been noted there and also at the recent liaison meeting with LLT's CEO. LWA suggested LINK consider where work on the environmental narrative best lies in LINK, that being the only priority in the summit list where there was no obvious forum; the need to regain political importance for the environment was growing again. **Action: DL, JA**

2.4 Strategic liaison

- LINK would await announcement about the next Chair before pursuing liaison further, as recent efforts to secure decisions from SNH about meetings had not met with success. LINK would ask Bob Macintosh (on 11.5) and Keith Connal (on 9.5) for updates on the situation and clarity on the process, and if necessary would consider PQs. **Action: ABM & LWA**

- A good, positive discussion with CEO Fiona Logan of LLT had been held. FL understood how LINK does and doesn't work and indicated interest in working on some issues together with the NGOs and hearing 'more of a growl' from the sector. A short report on the meeting was on the members' pages of the LINK site. The Board meeting noted the establishment of the LLT Countryside Trust including board members Ian Findlay, Anne McCall, Grant Moir among others, and modelled on Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust.

- A meeting with FCS (David Howat) was planned for 2 May, mainly introductory in aim and with Bob Macintosh Head of Environment SG on 11 May at which LINK would ask about his new role and

responsibilities and how these were likely to develop. A possible item on access/recreation was noted for both meetings, also CSGN in relation. Action: **JA email trustees for agenda items for these meetings**

- Ross planned a meeting with CBIS for which it was decided that Andy should prepare a short briefing on key issues. This first meeting might be a prelude to further discussions at Congress 2012 and beyond, and though LINK's paper on 'a flourishing Scotland and measures and indicators, might not be ready for the introductory meeting, Ross noted that the brief for that piece of work is available. Ross would draft a letter. **Andy to draft briefing**

- The proposed meeting with NEUS was postponed at the recommendation of the ATF.

Congress – Venue and band for 25th ceilidh celebration booked for 22 November, with first steering group meeting to be arranged. Alice hoped to involve trustees Mike, Lloyd, Deborah, and had other members in her sights including Sustrans and Living Streets. WRT the ceilidh trustees encouraged staff to circulate early notice of plans asking members to pass this on to people who had been active in LINK in the past, and proposed a few words from a guest of honour, who could represent LINK's early days, there. **Actions: Staff to promote 25th soon; Steering group to develop programme**

Membership – Scottish Ornithologists' Club had been re-admitted. AY offered to meet with JMT staff (CEO and HMcD) to discuss relationship with LINK. **Action: Angus**

Risk Review – The meeting noted the reviewed and revised risk register, including proposed actions and questions, On one, lease for LINK Perth office which had not been provided in final form over a period of several years, PR proposed LINK consider withholding rent payments until the official final lease is provided. **Action: staff would take the relevant actions from the review forward**

3. STANDING ITEM: REPORTS BACK

3.1 Trustee appraisal meetings 2011-2012

Deborah had circulated her report on the series of meetings held with most current trustees and Andy Fairbairn and Dan Barlow, trustees until Augs 2011. She had found these useful and thanked trustees for their time and contributions. She would talk with Paul Ritchie in May to complete the review and proposed the cycle be 3 yearly, rather than annually, as it was fairly time-demanding. She invited questions and sought yes or no replies on most points, and discussion of a few.

The meeting discussed the report, agreeing:

- 3-yearly cycles in tandem with the refresh of LINK strategy (next to start in 2014);
- challenge of funding for advocacy faced the movement generally and should be discussed at the Awayday
- on same issue LINK should ask SEFF to brief on the problems that need addressed (such as guidelines for funds, pricetag on our policy development ideas, level of representation);
- TF Convenors should regularly provide trustees with bullet points on key issues/concerns, to draw on at networking opportunities with decision makers (to be added as an additional box in the quarterly proforma to convenors and drawn together as single briefing sheet by staff, and circulated to trustees);
- LINK should develop position round hypothecation (see under 5 below)
- On voice/narrative, the meeting noted that LINK needs to protect its current modus operandi and avoid profiling environment and NGOs in such a way that the sector has to re-present itself (ie the points ABM makes in his draft briefing on community empowerment).
- On the public engagement point, it was suggested LINK discuss with member CEOs how to engage relevant players in the NGO workforce for discussion which can lead to action.

Action: DL, staff

3.2 Rio&20

Jonny had circulate the following update together with the report *A Flourishing Scotland: Sustainable Development – Scotland's Voice for Rio+20*:



- Event in December 2011 has resulted in the published document
- This is being tabled at Rio but unlikely to be officially used by Scottish Government as too many challenging challenges in there. It has however prompted a response from SG and it now seems certain that a Minister will attend Rio
- LINK board and main reps will shortly get an invite to a parliamentary event to be held on evening of 29th May on Rio and the question of "What next for SD in Scotland?"
- The event was organised by the 'Rio+20 Scotland group' comprising Jonny (LINK), Andrew Millson (SBC), Ruth W (SNIFFER), May East (CIFAL) and Philip Wright (former SG civil servant and now SNIFFER board member).
- The event on the 29th will be followed by a parliamentary debate on the 30th. The group will brief MSPs and be advising on Aileen McLeod's MSP speech. It'd be good if LINK could also brief. The motion will not be as strong as hoped (wording agreed back in January can't be changed)
- The two big outcomes which Jonny hoped to see from the initiative are Government action on the beyond GDP agenda and better SD governance through parliament (not SG) taking on an official scrutiny and reporting role. These linked to LINK's rolling manifesto asks. Useful to have brought SBC, and therefore some of the business community, with the NGOs already.

4. WORKING IN EUROPE

Andy had met Neil Ritchie of Scotland House to discuss whether and what LINK could see of official data and reports, as a means of keeping in touch. He reported briefly on that meeting. NR had indicated this was a very small team, with very stretched resources and no centralised system for inflow/outflow to/from Brussels. The team was separate from, though worked closely with UKREP

<http://ukeu.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/who's-who/our-teams/>

Andy's conclusion in the wake of this discussion was to recommend that LINK reconsider the Scotland Europa route as one which might serve LINK needs well, and which could possibly be shared with SWT (JH had suggested LINK share membership with SWT in 2011). Andy also recommended asking questions of Parliament on why there is no regular flow of information on what is happening at Europe affecting Scotland. **Action: Andy and Jonny to bring a proposal to the next Board in June**

5. POLITICAL STRATEGY REPORT

Andy's spring 2012 report was noted and welcomed as a very useful review. Overall there were no major changes; Andy judged that LINK was making progress with its advocacy.

Decisions made by the Board on questions highlighted in the PSR were:

- LINK rolling manifesto is a good tool, informing individual manifestos for elections, no major concerns on gaps at this stage. Use 2013 for a major refresh and gap-fill, introduced first by a proposal paper from Andy. **Proposal from ABM for the October Board and network**
- Parliamentary Forum to review how LINK network operates around elections and in interregnums. The meeting asked that this review should: factor in conclusions reached in the review of Everyone campaigning which had been carried out in 2007, make links to our work on the environmental narrative, and look at how other organisations which do this well approach their campaigns (an example was the LTC Alliance for Scotland). **Action: PF review taking these points into account**
- A LINK-wide discussion of energy (not simply renewables) was timely to underpin stronger and more refined advocacy by LINK; this should be informed by the LTF's paper, which would be invited for a deadline in the near future, possibly as a minority report if the LTF members en bloc do not feel able to support it as it stands. **Action: ABM to liaise with John for paper to June Board; Workshop to be scheduled**
- Positioning by LINK on hypothecation of taxes was important, as generic advocacy (as opposed to leverage of funds for ENGO work), and should be initiated by the Board: **Action: Angus**
- **CEC likely to sink as an issue ahead of the referendum**
- Future PSR focusses to include: the Sustainable Procurement Bill. Also, a mechanism by which LINK can facilitate engagement of local environment groups in network activity where there is mutual interest, given the power this will add to voice - to include assessment of the resource impact to LINK of doing so. **Action: ABM in Autumn PSR**



6. OPERATIONS

6.1 Final quarter report on 2011/12 operating plan

The meeting was content with progress as indicated in the final quarter report and had discussed the item flagged in red.

6.2 SE Festival report and after action review

The meeting thanked Rea Cris for this very good report and assessment of the events and the feedback received/gleaned. The nature of ministerial input was discussed and the importance of LINK's not underplaying its role in its evening. Ross advised that the reception should allow opportunity for Government's view on the environment to be heard, and that a strategic response from LINK to that is important; even if that cannot represent a united LINK view, the President should be able to make what s/he considers to be a suitable response. The aim of SEW as an exercise in 'lobbying light' was noted and the need for sophistication and undercover effort to allow LINK to say what it wants to say, and target other places/moments for the answers we want to come forward. The SEW steering group meeting soon to plan for 2013 would consider this in relation to running order of speakers at the reception. **Action: SEW steering group to consider**

The meeting did not feel there was much that LINK could do to raise/resolve concerns about how the current Minister performed. DL would be discussing our ministerial liaison amongst other things with Keith Connal SG at a meeting in May and there were plans to advise reps/convenors about agenda and tactics for ministerial meetings. **Action: DL, JA**

6.3 Operating Plan 2012/13 & key Issues

KPIs were discussed, both those agreed between LINK and funders SG and SNH, and those for LINK's own planning, which would be revisited and to some extent revised by the Board as part of the refresh of strategy in May. At least some of these needed to address a higher level than numerical (eg meetings, outputs) to address qualitative issues and impact of the network. **Action: Awayday**

LINK's KPI on membership income needed review; the 50% target had not been met the previous year; meantime then and current strategy was to raise even more income from membership. The meeting noted that the strategy for a higher level of membership income to overall costs, in a climate where membership income will decrease, was to build in efficiency savings including potentially cuts to services and staff-time. **Action: FSG June meeting to propose a model for June Board discussion**

The links to membership were noted both in terms of canvassing ex members to consider rejoining and to ensuring a financial assessment of any mechanism for facilitating engagement of local bodies in LINK. The meeting note that reporting against the funders' KPI on our intermediary role would need managed to avoid time spent in unduly detailed data collection. **Action: AW, JA, ABM to discuss**

6.4 Draft LINK carbon report for 2011-12

Jen spoke to the draft report prepared by Hugh Green. The meeting recorded thanks to Hugh for a very good, clear report and agreed that this should go on the website as well as receive promotion in the next newsletter as a good news story and good example of best practice. Staff indicated concerns to see the network move more clearly in the direction of carbon reporting: the view of trustees was that LINK should continue to do this and to encourage member bodies to do so, though must recognise that we have done what we can to encourage, and cannot force the issue. **Action: Web and promotion there as best practice; Newsletter and promotion as best practice; Bulletin encouragement to members**

7. FINANCE

7.1 Grants and other funds update, DPF bids

The update on current government funding was noted (these KPIs had been discussed under 6.3).

The meeting noted the Links' intention to seek extension funding for the marine project and posts. Jen confirmed that the status of the Marine Fighting Fund in relation to future funding was being assessed by the Links in conjunction with pursuing fresh funding. The Board confirmed that LINK could consider

assistance in bridging any gap between the end of current and start of new project funding (if promised), from its available funds balance at the time. **Action: JA, CD initially**

DPF bids for work by SEFF, Legal Governance subgroup, CATF, and Governance Group were considered; these were seen as important work areas and good bids; the absence of other bids at this stage was noted; and the meeting heard which other TFs had received funding recently, or had funds to carry forward for work this year. In order to leave a balance for further work during the year, the Board agreed to fund 3 of the bids in full and to offer £3,000 max to the CATF, encouraging CATF to look for member support towards the deficit, which would secure these organisations' logos on the final reports. The meeting also noted that discussion might be appropriate at the June meeting of a further top-up to the year's DPF. **Action: Board June agenda**

7.2 Outturn 2011/12

Hugh Green had prepared this. Though it had not yet been commented on by the accountants Hugh was confident in its accuracy. The end-of-year unrestricted reserves result was in line with the January forecast, allowing for EFF's 3/4s grant deferral (into 2012/13) and Craignish's full deferral (into 2012/13). The end-of-year restricted & designated Reserves figures were explained on page 3 which showed the projects with any balances to carry forward - essentially Marine (all the restricted moneys), and the newer DPF funds. PR confirmed that this was a good picture of LINK's finances and explained that the large surplus was the result of the Tubney Trust having awarded its full marine funding to LINK early (before the Trust dissolved in March 2011), and the EFF's deferral of most of its core grant to LINK into the 2012/13 year.

7.3 Revised Forecast 2012/13

The new forecast for 2012-13 was close to the original budget and any differences were explained in the notes on page 2. Staff had again revised spend downward. All income was secured.

The meeting noted that LINK was in a strong position for 2 years (to March 2014), beyond which there was uncertainty around further SNH funding, and only one further year of indicative commitment from SG (channelled via SNH). The Board again noted the need for discussion of the funding KPI and advised using these two years to plan what should happen if funding beyond that point declined further, or more sharply, and messages that members would need to hear, as LINK's key audience.

Thanks were recorded to staff for very clear funding reports.

8. AOB

8.1 Rural Parliament event – Vanessa Halhead had been in touch to alert LINK to an event in late May to which Andy would be invited; the meeting felt this would likely revisit thinking of the Convention of H&I.

8.2 FoES' funding situation was known to be difficult, and staff would soon meet FoES staff to discuss. Points to explore with her included the possibility that FoES might drop a threshold band was noted, the importance to LINK of the FoES role within the network, the support LINK was keen to give to the environmental justice work (led by Mary Church of FoES) given its relevance to the network and environmental governance.

9. NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting was rescheduled to 19 June (from 26th), along with the Networking meeting.