



## Minutes of LINK Board meeting held 27 January 2011 at the LINK office, Shore Road, Perth

### PRESENT

Trustees: Deborah Long (Chair), Dan Barlow (Vice Chair), Lloyd Austin, Andrew Fairbairn, Jonny Hughes, Eila Macqueen, Mike Robinson

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

### 1. APOLOGIES

Received from Paul Ritchie (Treasurer), Helen Todd, Ian Findlay and Vicky Junik.

Deborah relayed news from Vicky Junik who was resigning from the NTS to travel with her partner from February and therefore also resigning from LINK Board; she had stressed her appreciation of LINK's collective work and staff team. **Action: Deborah to reply with best wishes to Vicky**

The meeting noted the gap in NTS-LINK relations resulting from Vicky's resignation and John Rosser's imminent retiral and agreed to contact Terry Levinthal and Kate Mavor to explore benefits of continued engagement. **Action: DL, EM, MR**

### 2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING ON 21 October 2010

The minutes were approved for accuracy. Most matters were included on the day's agenda and others were noted as follows:

- After action reviews: these were postponed to the April networking meeting.
- Governance paper: ABM had this in prep and would circulate to Board and members shortly.
- Elections work: LINK manifesto was 2/3 complete with some sections being chased. Meetings with parties had been requested and Andy would keep trustees informed of dates. Several members had published manifestos showing interplay between these and LINK's. Andy felt party manifesto writers were using LINK material. Hustings guidance would be revised and go to all members the following week and members would be encouraged to hold events. A hustings diary on LINK's site for members' use included links to other partners such as SCCS.
- A very good festive reception had been organised in Edinburgh in December.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM OCTOBER MEETING

#### 3.1 Organisational Supporter pilot

The challenges to securing sign-up included austerity and government's 'shyness' of engaging with the voluntary sector and the meeting agreed to focus on getting those organisations which *were* inclined to support LINK in this way, to pay, rather than to get too exercised either on technicalities such as network affiliation (despite initial instincts to avoid network affiliation as OS (eg CSGN) networks 'nibbling' may be worth accommodating in some way) or on whether non-OS should be invited to receptions (where there is good policy reason to invite an organisation to a LINK event, we should continue to do that). Exploring OS with commercials had been 'parked' until the pilot completed and was assessed. The April Board would consider whither next.

**Actions: Trustees to pursue targets on the pilot list and keep Alice informed**

**Andy Myles to pursue the October additions to the pilot list**

**Jen follow up with British Waterways**

**Alice to liaise with Aedan Smith re Craig MacLaren**

**Alice to draft review for April discussion re promoting key benefits to likely interests**



### 3.2 Carbon accounting in the network

A fifth of members had responded to LINK's survey and offer of support. The Board agreed this remained priority for network reputation, should be proactively pursued with the report (on the pilot phase) being taken at the April meeting.

**Actions: Hugh to pursue survey alerting trustees if he encountered reluctance**

**Trustees ensure own organisations' responses & encourage others with whom in touch**

### 3.3 SNH Liaison

Deborah reported that Simon Pepper had relayed within SNH the concerns of members expressed to him following Congress. LINK was working towards a further meeting with Andrew in early May (DL, JH, HT attending, 3 May) to which item 3.4 below relates. The Board discussed how to re-establish closer relations at senior management level in SNH and to ensure awareness of the network's contribution amongst SNH grant panel members. There had been many changes to structure, in personnel and join-up between the NGO and Agency agendas was challenging to communicate. An introductory meeting with Kenneth Fowler (new Head of Communications) was in the diary (March) at which we would outline LINK's genesis, roles and complementary, independent approach to SNH.

**Actions:**

**Deborah to liaise with Ian Jardine about reinstating informal NGO-Agency liaison of previous years.**

**Trustees to use opportunities in their activities to refer SNH to the role and value of the network.**

**LINK to proactively seek meeting with Susan Davies, Kenneth Fowler and Andrew Bachell from April to catch up and share information.**

**Board to discuss further in April.**

### 3.4 Strategic priorities for SNH and LINK

The Board reviewed the draft paper outlining the 3 headings mooted in October discussion with Andrew Thin (marine recovery, ecosystem approach, beyond GDP). The paper proposed how SNH and LINK could each play to own strengths in promoting similar arguments. The meeting agreed these were an appropriate set of priorities at this stage, for the purposes of building relationships, and agreed that action which LINK undertakes must be work already planned and not additional, and therefore adding burden.

A subgroup would refine the paper to one or two key suggestions per issue, linking to sustainable land use strategy and current challenge scheme thinking and indicating financial 'asks' (in line with our grant bid) against each priority. Local media work (eg around the economic case for MPAs) would be promoted and SNH's crucial statutory roles – all with an emphasis on enhancement and recovery and not simply protection. The network would be advised of progress and the paper would be exchanged with SNH well in advance of the May meeting.

**Action: Subgroup of DB, JH, DL, AF and MTF reps to refine paper as indicated to forward to SNH**

### 3.5 Search for LINK President

The Search group's recent proposals on adjustments to the spec were noted with agreement that in coming years the focus should shift to LINK's external relationships and to building relations with new audiences very much beyond the environment sector and that this would be helped by a high level of public profile. The Board felt candidates should have empathy with the environment cause besides previous engagement in SD and understanding of the economic and social sectors; also that candidates be based in Scotland and should not be people perceived as connecting LINK mainly to things G/green but who could evidence the sector's relevance to wider policy and debate. The current list would be adjusted to reflect this and the group would start to make approaches inviting Helen to meet with individuals who confirmed interest in the role.

**Actions: Jen to amend and recirculate list**



## Trustees to forward further names for Search group take forward

### 3.6 FET

Report to be circulated by email.

**Action: LWA, HZ**

### 3.7 SEPA liaison

The Board noted SEPA interest in further policy meetings and reviewed practice to date around LINK's developing relationship with the Agency. Consensus was to ensure high-level meetings focus round strategy – and pick up on any problems in the policy relationships – rather than address policy which should be covered at lower level, technical meetings which task forces or interested groups of members can arrange with relevant SEPA staff. LINK would propose this to SEPA's Chair & CEO as well as internally so that everyone knows what to expect of different levels of engagement. LINK would also ensure agendas for high level meetings pursued the philosophy. At the next of these, SEPA's request for policy meetings would be discussed to clarify the approach. Members and TFs would be informed of SEPA's invitation with encouragement to respond if they wished. LINK staff would continue to pass on such invitations but not to coordinate technical meetings and to focus their effort round arrangements for the high level liaison.

**Action: Alice to follow up in conjunction with appropriate trustees (DB, JH, LWA)**

### 3.8 Strategic review and evaluation

There was not time to consider the proposal tabled – for a review of strategy with members, during 2011, and development of a new corporate strategy for 2012-15 in any detail and trustees would be asked to comment on this electronically, instead.

**Action: Jen to circulate review proposal for Trustees ' comment by email**

### 3.9 Local government work

The Board considered the proposal (with members) for wider local government work beyond the lifetime of the current SOA TF. Around 5 members had indicated interest. The Board felt members might need to see more detail before committing and agreed that if capacity were to stand in the way of wider work LINK's SOA work was anyway attracting attention, there were relevant asks in our manifesto and we could choose to augment this with briefings to relevant players as the elections loom. The paper was to be discussed with members at Networking.

### 3.10 Expectations of Ministerial liaison under next administration

There was no time to discuss the proposal in the Board papers. The meeting later noted the value of writing to new Ministers post-election to introduce LINK and anticipate further regular liaison for the benefits it offers - to all. LINK would attend a meeting convened by SG in February to discuss high-level, third sector engagement with Ministers.

**Action: LINK letters to new Ministers, post-election**

## 4. FINANCIAL

### 4.1 Outturn to end Dec 2010

Hugh spoke to the circulated paper reporting that finances were in good health, most headings on target though potential for one or two subscription debts; fresh funding had been raised by Alice

from Craignish Trust, discretionary spending was mostly on course and expenditure was being kept down. There were 13 project funds of which many would close by March leaving Marine and SLU running. There was a proposal that the DPF balance be carried forward to 2011/12's DPF. The meeting thanked Hugh.

#### 4.2 Draft budget for 2011/12

Staff had prepared a draft, albeit based on a number of variables.

Income was a 'best guess' for which assumptions were listed. The meeting noted that smaller members were under increasing budget pressure and could not have external subscriptions funded by SNH. LINK would forecast a higher decrease under this heading. Since LINK's grants might be lower the forecast income of £353k was at the optimistic end of the scale though a healthy available funds balance forecast for the year-end would offset immediate impacts of further downturn.

The Board noted that VAT rise and inflation at 3% (minimum) were forecast under expenditure, the salary line was being checked with the Employment subgroup and a small deficit of £6.5k was forecast at this stage. The Board agreed to keep a close eye on progress advising that a discretionary fund of £15k might be too high and should be reviewed at the April Board in the wake of grantor decisions. It was agreed to leave the figure as forecast until then, assuming no further DPF allocations other than final decisions on the £2.5k earmarked for local government spend in the meantime.

**Action: Hugh Green to make adjustments**

**Next Board to review the budget and discuss appropriate DPF allocation**

#### 4.3 Fundraising & response team updates

The updates as circulated were noted and Dan Barlow explained how the response team was assessing costs of various 'services' under all the columns A-C. The response team was asked to update the Board after its 3 February discussion. The Board encouraged staff to continue to apply caution about the need to spend.

**Action: Staff to continue to apply caution**

**Response Team to report to Board**

### 5. OPERATIONAL REPORTING & PLANNING

#### 5.1 OP 2010/11 – report on quarter 3 and KPI progress

The reports were noted. Several TFs were searching for new convenors and / or discussing changes to name and objective. The meeting noted that there were issues round member capacity to engage in collective work - and in planning that work- and that this applied to new areas mooted in November's review.

#### 5.2 Draft 2011/12 'work plan'

Available information on collective work planned so far for 2011 onwards had been circulated and was considered. Several TFs were continuing with detailed action plans; others had not submitted yet plans; local government/nance had been discussed (3.9 above); TEEB/sustainable Scotland work would depend on BTF and CATF discussion and how LINK bodies felt they could support outcomes of the Carnegie Commission initiative (report due Feb); SEFF concerns about match funding for Lottery should be discussed with SNH at a relevant liaison meeting. The draft work plan table would be discussed at Networking and developed as plans and capacity became clearer into an operating plan.

**Action: TFs to confirm plans and capacity**

**Staff to draft OP**

**Raise Lottery concerns with SNH**



### 5.3 Issues various

i. Spending review, environment and next steps with LINK paper - The meeting advised that LINK and members should draw on our paper to inform input to the Christie Commission and that Andy should remind members to use its proposals in the lead up to the Scottish elections. Also that LINK's letter of congratulation on the appointment of the next Cabinet Secretary should refer to the role LINK had taken with the current Parliament and to the paper. **Action: Andy Myles, Jen**

ii. LINK environment & Law report – The Board advised that LINK and TFs continue to reference the report in advocacy work reminding the new Parliament about scrutiny. There had been some successes and parliamentarians were becoming more aware as recent discussions of WANE Bill showed. A LINK manifesto ask should be drafted. **Action: Andy Myles**

iii. Future of SD scrutiny - Trustees agreed to respond to Jonny Hughes by email with views on how SD should in future be championed, post demise of SDCS, in advance of the March Holyrood Seminar which he would be addressing, as an SWT staff member and as a LINK trustee. **Action: Trustees**

iv. Developing a 'test cases framework' - Andy had proposed that the Board consider signing off a framework to inform LINK decisions about cases which should become test cases. Andy was asked to develop a discussion paper for the April Board. **Action: Andy Myles for April Board**

v. Membership of Scotland Europa – The meeting considered SWT's invitation to LINK (also open to individual LINK members) to share a year's trial membership with SWT to explore whether this gives Scottish eNGOs more influence at the EU level. The conclusion was that since the issue for eNGOs has always been capacity to engage, and not access to or membership of networks, this was not the time for further investment by LINK. However, members would be encouraged to consider at the Networking meeting. **Action: Networking**

## 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 6.1 CNPA interest in both board level and member level liaison over Local Plan

The Board discussed recent contact from CNPA to Deborah proposing a meeting of Park senior staff with LINK Board shortly and a workshop with LINK members in June when the new local plan went to consultation. Trustees agreed that any high-level liaison should focus on strategic issues relating to the spirit of the legislation and how it is implemented; that discussion should note that engagement in LPIs is a decision for specialist and local bodies, that LINK Board understands these bodies' current frustrations, and that the Board would not play a role in that detailed policy discussion.

Development of a new local plan would be appropriate for discussion with member bodies and other specialists at the local level.

**Action: Deborah to liaise further with Françoise van Buuren of CNPA**

### 6.2 Themed years

Françoise van Buuren had also invited LINK to consider inputting to the plans for further themed years for Scotland and particularly to planning for 2013 as 'Year of Natural Scotland'. The Board agreed that LINK should accept the opportunity and encourage members to engage at this stage.

**Action: Deborah would confirm to Françoise and circulate the information via Bulletin**

### 6.3 Proposal to change the date of LINK's AGM

The meeting considered a proposal to shift timing of LINK's AGM timing to later in the calendar year primarily to take pressure off the end-of-financial-year period. LINK's M&A had been amended in 2010 to allow for an AGM to be held at any time. Trustees were keen that the event continued to be



held in conjunction with another fixture in LINK's calendar. This suggested autumn timing. Jen was asked to check that such a change would not contravene Companies House and OSCR protocols.

**Action: Jen to check legal situation re change of timing and confirm**

#### 6.4 Third sector seminar

LINK had been invited to a discussion with SG about high-level liaison between the sector and Ministers. Andy indicated that SCVO had defended to SG the inclusion of the eNGO sector. Andy would attend the meeting.

**Andy: to attend and report back**

#### 6.5 Making wider connections

Mike Robinson reported that RSGS had recently made Deborah Long a Fellow, and proposed that LINK consider ways in which it too can develop its profile and achieve greater clout in sectors beyond current audiences as well as on the boards of bodies with policy responsibilities beyond environment. The meeting briefly considered traditional barriers to this, including members' caution over promoting the LINK brand above their own, and agreed to map the opportunities and bring the issue back for discussion at the April meeting.

**Action: Andy Myles, MR, DL to prepare paper for April discussion**

#### 7. NEXT MEETINGS (LINK Perth office)

21 April, 1015, Board

21 April, 1330, Board & Networking

21 June, 1015, Board

21 June, 1330, Board & Networking

20 October, all day Board