



MINUTES of the LINK Board meeting held on 6 October 2011, in Edinburgh

Present

Trustees Deborah Long, Eila Macqueen, Paul Ritchie, Jonny Hughes, Helen Todd, Angus Yarwood
In attendance Helen Zealley (President)
Diarmid Hearn (Observer),
Staff - Jen Anderson, Rea Cris (observing), Hugh Green, Andy Myles, Alice Walsh

Deborah opened the meeting and welcomed Angus and Diarmid to the Board and its discussions.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from trustees Lloyd Austin, Ian Findlay and Mike Robinson.

2. Minutes of last meeting (28 June)

2.1 Minutes for accuracy - These were approved.

2.2 AGM outcomes

The meeting unanimously approved the co-option of Ian Findlay and Mike Robinson to the Board for a further year.

Trustees were asked to sign and leave with staff the two trustee declarations. **Action: Trustees**

2.3 President search

Deborah reported on a positive meeting between Board reps, Helen Zealley and Ross Finnie in August, after Ross's addition to the searchlist following the Scottish elections in May. The meeting had explored role and 'fit' including: representing LINK (RF was keen to be well briefed and happy to be our envoy), LINK position contradicting Lim Dem positions (RF would not have problems, was in his view beyond politics now). The Searchgroup felt Ross was a strong candidate and had undertaken to keep him informed post Board discussions.

The meeting noted that no responses had been received from the three additional individuals approached in August as part of the search and that all others approached had declined, many on grounds of other competing commitments. Trustees welcomed Ross's enthusiasm and agreed that the Board should go ahead and propose his appointment now to members, especially in view of his empathy with LINK's cause, his articulateness, understanding of Scottish contexts, his public profile and contacts. The possible need for an SGM to appoint the new President was noted; staff would check whether this could form part of the SGM proposed at 5.3 below.

Actions: JA to advise members; Deborah to advise Ross in due course; Jen to consult lawyer on SGM

Deborah reported that the individuals approached as part of the search would be invited to LINK events over coming years, in case any might be interested in future opportunities to work with the movement.

Action: KMacC to amend database accordingly

2.4 Strategic liaison

Reports on recent liaison with SNH, SPA and CNPA were noted. These involved significant investment of trustee time.

The Board concurred with Deborah's view that quarterly meetings with Andrew Bachell (SNH), as well as those with Chair and senior staff, would place too much demand on LINK trustees, and agreed that LINK instead suggest to Andrew Bachell that he join the now 6-monthly meetings between LINK Board and

senior SNH staff. The meeting also discussed the next day's meeting with Andrew Thin noting a number of points to raise there.

SNH's proposal for strategic discussion with NGO heads about the impact of the economic challenge ahead was discussed; the Board was keen that this did not morph into a situation where LINK did not retain the ability to select its reps, but equally interested in LINK's being involved. Deborah was asked to research the thinking with Andrew and Simon and let the Board know after that meeting on 7 October.

Action: DL/JA to email Board further information about the strategic discussion

The meeting approved the proposal to amend LINK's operating principles to ensure TF convenors shared responsibility for giving SNH a heads-up in advance of issuing press statements and publications in which the Agency was criticised/named, so as to ensure scope for discussion of either joint or separate press statements.

Action: AW to amend OPs and alert TF Convenors

The meeting agreed with Lloyd's view that a wider civic discussion about SD and its interpretation, and impact on Agencies, is worth holding, and that LINK's 2011 Congress, developments through its Economics Forum, and its Governance publication might well lead to such a discussion taking place.

Action: Review April 2012

3. Strategic considerations

3.1 Board role, structures and succession planning:

3.1.1 a. & b. LINK Operating Guidance & Strategic discussion within the network

The Board agreed that no changes to LINK's operating guidance were necessary in respect of issuing statements; trustees felt the Board's recent proposal for LINK to sign up to the NPF briefing had been in line with current guidance, and believed changes to guidance would likely result in LINK's not being able to say things which it might need to say as part of its objective to be 'a strong voice for the environment'. Trustees agreed that the issue behind recent questioning of the guidance and of the Board's strategic role was dissatisfaction with whether and what LINK has done to address consensus around some renewable energy issues.

Trustees were keen to see that members, task forces, trustees and staff are reminded, mindful of and encouraged to remind others in their own organisations of the generally good, and broad, consensus to which the network is signed up, across a wide range of energy issues, in positions including <http://www.scotlink.org/files/publication/LINKReports/LINKctfStateClimateTimeAct.pdf> and <http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PressReleases/LINKmtfPressACMELaunch.pdf>.

The meeting noted that the Landscape Task Force planned to circulate a draft LINK statement on the role of the current subsidy structure in relation to driving demand for onshore wind and thus further encroachment and damage to Scottish landscapes. Trustees welcomed this, agreeing to await this rather than prompting a LINK-wide discussion sooner, and hoped there would be an early chance for members to consider the draft before the end of the year. The Board noted that the current Energy Bill going through Westminster tackles subsidy regimes. It was understood that the Landscape Task Force was aware of this though Jen was asked to flag this.

Action: JA to contact LTF w.r.t. above points

3.1.2 Roles in relation to current structure:

3.1.2.a Trustee appraisals - Deborah was engaged in a round of meetings with trustees and would write up a generic draft report on which trustees' comments would be invited before the final report went to the January Board. John Mayhew had started this process during his chairmanship, in line with legal advice on the value of this kind of discussion, annually. Deborah had met half the trustees, hoped to



have met with all by the end of November. It was proving to be a very interesting and useful process. Trustees were identifying as key issues for LINK in coming years the importance of funding and financial security and the need for tough decisions and very clear prioritisation going hand-in-hand. A further suggestion was for trustees to have a mechanism for reporting back on representative work in which they have been engaging for LINK and getting guidance from the wider Board, in respect of which Deborah indicated that future Board agendas would include this as a standing item. A fourth suggestion related to LINK's objective of being the collective voice for the movement and the likelihood that this could become even more important; the proposal was, given occasional questions over use of that voice, to commission an expert who specialised in making relationships work to explore with LINK how to do this better and make the most of being a networking forum. The meeting noted these observations.

Actions: DL to circulate draft report to trustees December for comment

JA to include new standing item in Board agendas

3.1.2.b Partnership representation One suggestions flagged by trustees in appraisals related to this (see 3.1.2.a above). Deborah reported that outcomes were still awaited from the mapping of LINK and members' relationships with the policy sector, begun in the summer. Andy observed that political parties were commenting on the strength and breadth of LINK's relations with wider society, that our links beyond the environment sector were being noted by political players. Jen indicated that most members had yet to respond to the mapping.

Actions: Jen and Andy to pursue member feedback to the mapping of connections

Reports back to be organised at Strategic Planning:

By Andy on EEB AGM

By Jonny on Rio+20 and Scottish report

Reports back to be organised at January Board:

By Jonny on international connections and representations

3.1.3 Succession planning

Diarmid Hearn was taking part now at Board meetings as an observer in advance of his likely nomination by NTS in 2012.

The meeting noted that MCoS had requested that their trustee, Ron Payne, attend a Board meeting to find out more about the Board's way of working and the Board indicated that Ron should come along to the January meeting to observe the Board at work; this coincided with the networking meeting which was likely to interest Ron.

Action: Jen to contact Ron Payne w.r.t. January Board meeting

Deborah indicated that she wished to set up a small subgroup to plan succession for 2012 onwards.

Actions:

HT and EM to keep the Board informed w.r.t. interest by individuals they had contacted.

Trustees to alert Deborah to any changes in own plans affecting their role in LINK from autumn 2012.

Trustees requested to volunteer for subgroup on succession planning (AY interested, from January)

3.2 Strategic review to inform forward strategy to 2015

The proposals circulated in the Board papers for a 2-part review (members, externals) to refresh LINK's strategy, were noted and approved. Deborah volunteered for the subgroup and the meeting proposed that Lloyd and Ian would bring useful insights if willing to join. The meeting discussed the draft questions (circulated the day before) and noted some changes and additions, which staff would take on board before circulating members later in October.

Actions:

Staff to survey members; Subgroup to develop brief for external survey



4. Operations

4.1 Political Strategy Report Autumn 2011 (Draft)

ABM spoke briefly to the paper and key points including the move away from nuclear by a number of countries and corporates.

The meeting approved the provision of some support by staff to the new Economics Forum and further investment of staff time in discussions with the Links and Green Alliance around use of and input to EEB. It was noted (5d) that current discussions round environmental justice might require further communication within LINK and that there may be a proposal coming forward for a small LINK grouping. The meeting also heard that the planned publication of LINK's governance paper had been outlined to SCVO, to whose own agenda the issues are very relevant.

ABM reported from the recent round of LINK meetings with parties' spokespeople, that the opposition parties are unsure about how best to react to the SNP majority in relation to a number of issues and that there is concern around what appears to be rather a strong marshalling tendency afoot within SNP; LINK participants in the meetings were flagging LINK's governance and economics areas as ones worth engaging with.

The Board supported Lloyd's proposal that LINK should develop a view around Holyrood fiscal powers and hypothecation and hoped this might form one of the strands which the Economics Forum would develop.

Plans for local elections campaigning and hustings work were noted.

Jonathan Hughes undertook to draft a paper to circulate to members in advance of Congress on the Scottish synthesis report for the Rio+20 Earth Summit and reasons for LINK to engage and support this Scottish level initiative. **Action: JH to circulate paper ahead of Congress**

Andy would amend the report and circulate to wider LINK colleagues. **Action: ABM to circulate wider**

4.2 Quarter 2 report on 2011/12 operating plan and KPIs

Staff were thanked for a very useful report. The Board noted that LINK was meeting and even exceeding its KPIs, though as the number of stakeholder groups relevant to environment in Scotland decreases, LINK may need to review that target.

W.r.t the new Economics Forum the meeting felt this could usefully pursue Spending Review/Scottish Budget issues, other LINK Seminar outcomes, fiscal hypothecation, and make contact with / be aware of work by NEF and others such as Council of Economic Advisers, and the relevant SCCS subgroup.

W.r.t the new LINK NPs task force the Board noted that this had been established with the support of a number of members and endorsed the decision.

SEPA's slow follow-up on actions agreed at LINK-SEPA liaisons was noted. **Actions: JH to liaise with Dave Gorman. DL to write to Campbell Gemmell as he steps down**

5. Finance

5.1 Budget outturn to 30.9.11 and revised forecast for the financial year

Hugh Green spoke to the half-year outturn reporting a very healthy financial position with a funds balance of £250,000 banked; at this point LINK had taken in 80% of projected income for the year and spent just 40% of projected expenditure.

The forecast for unrestricted reserves had been reviewed, with a rise on membership, uncertainty about any non-Marine EFF funding, and increases based on a further check across headings. The expenditure forecast was down by £3,000 (note 13 refers), indicating a likely small deficit and £53,000 in unrestricted reserves at the year end.

The restricted and designated position looked very healthy (note 5 refers). Tubney Trust was closing down had already given LINK the 2012/13 grant, now put away for a year in a term account; LINK's accountants advised that this could not be deferred out of this year's accounts, so the result would be a large unrestricted funds balance which would be explicitly covered in the narrative as well as the notes in the 2012 annual report and accounts.

The restricted and designated forecast including an allocation of £5,000 to discretionary project funding, as well as some unspent DPF, bringing the total unspent DPF to nearer £10,000. Staff would encourage TFs to bid for work which could spend by 31 March. The issue impacted LINK's SNH grantaid which relies on headings including project spend. The meeting noted possible new spend areas of:

- Contribution to design print and launch of Rio+20 report
- Contribution to research around legal issues relating to environmental justice
- Economics Forum may require support to advance its agenda eg via consultant

The meeting thanked Hugh for very well presented accounts and explanation.

Action: Staff to email Convenors about DPF a.s.a.p.

5.2 The wider financial position, response team and FSG

The meeting noted the report on recent work within LINK by Funding Subgroup and staff to brainstorm sources of funding, pursue these, meet with all traditional grantors. Scottish Government had indicated that LINK should expect at least a reduction of 5% a year and would advise staff shortly of when to apply for the 3-year package from 2012. The overall effort was returning dividend including a Gannochy Trust grant for three years of £7,500 per year (half of the amount sought) towards the AISO post. Paul Ritchie observed that the Gannochy Trust and Craignish funding improved LINK's situation by £12.5k pa over the coming 2-3 years, reducing pressure a little.

Trustees were encouraged to volunteer for the FSG to replace the loss of the three who had left. Angus Yarwood indicated an interest (preferably from after December). The Board reviewed the remit for this subgroup noting the value of its important and detailed discussion of subscriptions and of funding scenarios, in terms of informing the full Board without asking too much time of its busy agendas. The FSG role as a sieve for bids to the discretionary project fund was also considered important though trustees were keen that the full Board continue to ratify bids, where possible at Board meetings, and otherwise by electronic discussion in between board meetings. The meeting noted that the remit overstates the FSG's role in the annual accounts process.

Actions: Trustees to volunteer for FSG; Staff to update FSG remit

5.3 SGM to ratify LINK subscriptions for 2012/13

The meeting approved the proposal to hold an electronic SGM in March 2012 for ratification of subscriptions for 2012/13, so as to ensure that this and future years' subscriptions were approved in advance of the financial year to which they relate. The meeting noted that the FSG would take plans forward and keep the Board advised. Trustees assumed that the same SGM might be used to formally appoint the LINK President (see 2.3 above).

Actions:

FSG to develop the proposal and timescale for consultation with members

JA to consult lawyer and advise January Board of SGM preparation needs

6. AOB

6.1 Application for membership by Planning Democracy – The meeting agreed to recommend that members approve the membership application.

Action: Kate MacColl to take the recommendation to members



6.2 Recent PQ on LINK's funding – The provenance of a recent parliamentary question on LINK's public funding was not known. This had been answered on 22 September. Gareth Heavisides SG had researched the response and had checked details with Alice Walsh and SNH. The meeting noted that other networks receive good support from Scottish Government and that LINK's funding is relatively modest. Andy reported that a recent LINK meeting with Conservative reps had touched on this; LINK had indicated happiness to discuss further.

6.3 Trainings / Presentations for Trustees

Angus Yarwood had suggested that in the wake of Freedom of Information changes in Scotland likely to be made during 2012, the Board might wish to invite a presentation. Trustees were invited to flag up other areas on which speakers / training / refresh would be helpful.

Action: review summer 2012

7. Meetings ahead

2011

- 17 November Congress
- 18 November Strategic planning
- 14 December Festive Reception

2012

- 26 January Board & Networking
- 26 April Board & Networking
- 26 June Board & Networking
- 18 October Board & Networking
- 22 November Congress
- 23 November AGM & Strategic planning
- 5 December Festive Reception