

LINK G6 meeting with Roseanna Cunningham, 9 March 2011

1. Future of G6 meetings.

The Minister and officials were urged to continue meeting G6 along with holding separate LINK meetings, as they had different remits and values. There was a desire on both sides to maintain these two meetings and officials would advise incoming government accordingly, but it would depend on the next Minister.

2. Climate Change.

a) Low carbon vehicles – there was a consultation a year ago but the final strategy has never appeared. The Minister said the action plan would be published later this year, after the election.

b) Public body duty – an extra item on agenda, Minister was asked if there could be mandatory reporting by public bodies on carbon emissions but she resisted this as all public bodies would have to report on their monitoring anyway, and the question of whether this should be mandatory would only be looked at if there were problems. An assessment group has been set up to help public bodies with their duties, including reporting. SG's own carbon assessment tool would be made available for use, along with tools developed by SEPA, FCS, etc.

c) Land Use Strategy – to be published before 22 March. The strategic focus has been revised following consultation and will be more about protection and enhancement, including peat, and stakeholder involvement will be included. There will not be an oral statement. LUS group in SG likely to continue to with a team of 2, rather than 5.

3. Other land use issues

a) Peatlands – Minister thanked NGOs for keeping peatlands as an issue high on the agenda. NGOs thanked SG for diverting some of the Exxon fine towards peatland restoration (it went to RSPB).

b) Agri-environment – Minister was reminded that this had been discussed at previous LINK meeting and Cabinet Sec was due to meet Ramblers, NFUS, SRPBA and British Horse Society the next day to discuss re-design of next scheme as regards funding for access provision. Minister was also reminded by RSPB that Rural Priorities aspect of SRDP is very important, not just LMOs. She said SG is in the process of letting a contract to monitor the effectiveness of RP scheme.

c) Forestry – phytophthora concerns raised by NTS but Minister said she is being briefed on this by FCS and they are not alarmed yet. However, NTS is concerned that although this is a notifiable disease, there is a lack of compliance and enforcement. RSPB passed on woodland sensitivity map to direct potential renewable developments away from sensitive areas. The Minister thanked NGOs for the positive comments given in the media following the story about renewable developments in FCS estate.

4. Marine issues

a) Marine Protected Areas – steady progress is being made towards East Mingulay SAC. The Minister recognised that socio-economic aspects are not factors to be taken into account in designation as it is purely scientific, but in reality they did need to be considered in the process. NTS said that Fair Isle was very keen to be a MPA so where the landowner and community were keen this should progress, and then could help to pro-actively sell the concept to other communities.

- b) National Marine Plan – to be published before 23 March. A Marine Atlas will be published on Friday which will support the NMP.
- c) “Securing the benefits” consultation – there were over 100 responses which are now being analysed. Benefits should be used beyond investing in more renewables, eg, community benefits such as fuel poverty. FoES proposed a Forum for future Transition be set up.