

# Joint Links Seminar

## Making the most of collaborative opportunities in the UK

15 – 16 November 2006, Cardiff



### Background to the seminar

The purpose of the seminar was to provide an opportunity for the members and staff of the four Links to update and share information on the developing political cultures, administrations and environmental advocacy needs in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The intention was also to give delegates the chance to decide how and when members of the Sister Links should collaborate, and to plan for future joint work in various policy areas.

The aim of the seminar was to build knowledge, create new opportunities, and develop an efficient and effective communication system to better inform and improve the success of Link members' individual and joint campaigning activities and consultation work.

The following notes provide a summary of the feedback received from the various workshops and discussions that were held over the course of the seminar.

### List of Attendees

<b>NIEL</b>	Ian Cole Isabel Hood Jim Saunders Pat Jess Seamus óg Gallagher Sue Christie	Tidy NI MHT MHT/NIEL NIEL NIEL NIEL
<b>SEL</b>	Alex Hopkinson Calum Duncan David Downie Dr Deborah Long Jane Herbstritt Jen Anderson Jonathan Hughes Mandy Gloyer	Scottish Environment Link Marine Conservation Society WWF Scotland Plantlife Scotland Scottish Environment Link Scottish Environment Link Scottish Wildlife Trust RSPB
<b>WCL</b>	Alexia Welbelove Annie Smith Claire Lawson Hilary Allison Dr Jayne Manley James Cooper	WCL WCL RSPCA Woodland Trust Plantlife Woodland Trust

Jodie Bettis	WCL
Matt Shardlow	Buglife
Mike Townsend	Woodland Trust
Nicola Hutchinson	Plantlife
Paul Mosley	WWF
Sam Fanshawe	Marine Conservation Society
Tony Gent	The Herpetological Cons Trust

**WEL**

Amy Peters	Council for National Parks
Catherine Flitcroft	British Mountaineering Council
Christine Moore	Groundwork Wales
Geraint Hopkins	Wales Environment Link
Hannah Pitt	National Trust
Ian McIntosh	Groundwork Wales
Iwan Ball	WWF
Katie-jo Luxton	RSPB
Michele Aitchison	Wales Environment Link
Morgan Parry	WWF
Naomi Luhde-Thompson	FoE
Oriel Price	Council for National Parks
Richard Dodd	Bat Conservation Trust
Rory Francis	Coed Cadw/Woodland Trust
Rowland Pittard	Youth Hostels Association
Russel Hobson	Butterfly Conservation
Ruth Lovell	RSPB
Susan Evans	Wales Environment Link
Tegryn Jones	Keep Wales Tidy
Trevor Dines	Plantlife Wales

**Visiting consultant** Dr Neil Caldwell

## Day 1, Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November - Workshops

### Presentations - Challenges and opportunities of working in a devolved UK

- Environmental NGO engagement and experience in each part of the UK
  - context & structures
  - what is devolved
  - opportunities and approaches
- How the Links currently support members in joint work
- How UK bodies engage across the UK
  - using the examples of WWF and Plantlife

### Workshops

Delegates were split into 5 group workshops, having each been given two of the following questions to discuss. Each group reported back their ideas/answers in the plenary session that followed.

#### **Q1) Are there structural/political/cultural opportunities we are currently under-investing in as eNGOs and/or as Links for environment and animal welfare work in the devolved UK?**

##### Use of MPs

- Do MPs have the same opinions as Members in devolved administrations of the same party?
- Joint working could help devolved Links' access to MPs, and WCL's access to AMs and MSPs

##### Communication between Links and within organisations

- More regular, informal exchange of information is needed - not just on the 'big' issues
- Requires a change of mind-set for everyone involved
- Need to always consider whether information may be of value/interest to other Links
- Should pass information beyond taskforces – but need to know who to pass the information on to
- Need to encourage communication about the implications of policies for different administrations e.g. the Marine Bill

##### Joint campaigning

- e.g. Elections at Westminster
- Requires early agreement and involvement of all Links

##### European legislation

- Various barriers to working jointly on this, but also opportunities
- Possibility of a Link European policy officer?
- Could form joint UK eNGO positions
- How would this fit with the Link's structures?

##### Exploiting differences between governments and parties in the different countries

- Highlight and encourage best practice

##### Sharing of internal, best practice

- Could share organisational development and organisational structures
- e.g. given of the 'devolved' structure of Keep Wales Tidy and Keep Britain Tidy

**Q2) What kinds of barriers exist within and between eNGOs for joint work in the devolved UK?**

Within eNGOs

- Structural – centralised UK Headquarters versus the regions
- Communication - e.g. NIEL to the south
- UK versus national agendas
- Resources
  - lack of time to consider the bigger picture
  - lack of funding to support national offices
  - the influence / priorities of membership

Between eNGOs

- Issue of capacity
- Timing to seek input – must be at the beginning, not the end
- Active versus passive engagement

**Q3) Can eNGOs do anything to overcome these and achieve more together?**

- Need to identify the overall benefit of co-operation
- Need increased capacity to work on the national perspective so as to balance the UK perspective
- Organisational strategy should not over-ride the need to work with political structures
- Consider political boundaries to be as important as environmental boundaries
- What is UK versus national?

**Q4) In which key ways can the Links most effectively assist in overcoming barriers and enhancing co-operation amongst their members and between countries?**

(Question addressed under other questions)

**Q5) On what issues or types of issues should there be a 'UK perspective' promoted by all the Links and what mechanisms are required to deliver this?**

Types of issues

- Marine Bill - overarching legislation and devolved powers
- Wildlife conservation issues - e.g. 2010 target
- European legislation
- Climate change - UK wide policy but solutions are local
- Invasive species - GB strategy being developed
- NERC Bill / planning policy Wales
- 2007 agri-environment groups

How to identify issues

- Need a standard process e.g. sharing of work plans / lobbying plans
- But not all task forces are in place across borders
- Ensure all Links have a task force discussing the issue
- Proposals from membership, or secretariat of taskforces

Depends on point of delivery

- Central policy
- Local commitment
- Need for consistency

#### Difficulties faced by smaller NGOs

- Do not have policy officers
- Difficulties in identifying the issues
- Dealing with issues in their devolved country, which is difficult to link with UK policy

#### Joint Link Meetings

- Should be more Joint Link Working Groups for cross-cutting themes e.g. BAPs
- Smaller eNGOs in devolved administrations would then be able to consider UK issues
- But if not planned jointly from outset then have to bring people up to speed
- Link cannot do it alone, must come from members and must be 'need' driven

#### Practicalities

- One task force could take the lead on a particular issue
- Would be up to the members to get opinions from colleagues / other Link members
- Chair could be tasked with disseminating the information
- Those working abroad can identify issues and inform us
- Problems of time and capacity

#### Role of JNCC

- How they work in UK and in Europe
- England based
- Other issues beyond wildlife, e.g. landscape
- Implementation at a devolved level and UK

#### **Q6) When is a single voice for the UK a benefit?**

- International and European commitments  
e.g. CITES, UK BAP
- Audience dependent
- Subject dependent  
e.g. some parts of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy are not devolved strategies
- Non devolved issues  
e.g. green taxation; some areas on energy; marine environment beyond 12 NM

#### **Can a united voice be effective in persuading devolved administrations to act?**

- By advocating 'best practice' from one country to other countries, including European best practice
- Structures of Government – countries learning from one another
- UK could risk 'patronising' devolved countries
- Is the answer 'No'?

#### **Q7) What undeveloped issues should we concentrate on (if any) and what actions are required?**

- Taxation and fiscal measures under UK control e.g. PSA targets
- Marine 'mess' – 12NM, 12-200NM
- Energy – nuclear power, oil exploitation, wind farms
- International agreements
- Strengths of this
  - United voice through the Links
  - Power of the sheer numbers of our members

## Day 2, Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November - Workshops

Delegates were divided into 5 themed workshops to consider a variety of policy issues as the vehicle for how best to work together.

The key features of intelligence gathered, and agreements for future communication and joint-working methods, were drawn out during the open forum discussion that followed.

The seminar was then brought to a close by a panel of the Links Chairs who initiated a final discussion by summarising the conclusions they had formed from the seminar, as well as the implications for their Link.

The discussion resulted in a number of actions being agreed upon by the delegates for future Joint Link work.

### Workshop 1 - Best practice communications between eNGOs and between Links

#### Capacity

- How much information can we deal with
- Need to prioritise information that is circulated
- Depends on time and volume
- Receiving some information a number of times >> overload

#### Methods of communication

- Teleconferencing
- Could go beyond e-mail >> e-conferencing, web-based discussion forums
- Smaller organisations do not always have e-mail or internet access

#### 'UK' projects

- Information does not always get passed on to regional organisations
- Sometimes a denial of communication problems
- Could share organisational structure best practice between eNGOs
- Could share of advocacy agendas

#### Structure of the Links

- WEL – Council, management committee, working groups, e-groups
- SEL - Annual forward planning meeting, six month reviews, annual congress meeting, AGM, quarterly board meeting, taskforces
- WCL – Taskforces, AGM, forward planning review, meeting of chairs, management committee for strategic planning, meeting of Chief Executives
- NIEL – management team, members meeting – but problem of attendance; lower financial contribution from member subscriptions
- There are significant benefits from sharing best / worst practice between Link staff
- What opportunities are there for the empowerment of smaller eNGOs?

#### Link taskforces

- Communication between taskforces across UK is needed

#### Members use of the Links

- Members use of the Links as a source of information
- Use of / need for a parliamentary officer?

#### Suggested actions

- Trustees of Links could meet annually
- Web-based discussion forums

## **Workshop 2 - Biodiversity**

### Questions raised by the group

- What is biodiversity? What are we trying to deliver?
- What is the guidance saying? Who is drafting and testing the guidance?
- Who is going to test the legislation?
- Duty to 'further' rather than 'regard'?
- How does the marine environment fit in?

### Issues

- Lack of commitment and leadership
- Difficulties in protecting marine species and habitats
- Northern Ireland – failure to recognise 2010 target

### UK BAP

- Delivery of targets
- Lack of commitment from statutory agencies
- Lack of implementation of the duty
- Who is providing leadership?

### Potential role of 'Joint Links'

- Influence the agenda via e.g. a UK biodiversity taskforce
- Would provide a UK framework
- In writing remits for Standing Committees
- Testing guidance
- In helping link LBAPS to UK
- Working strategically

### Influence over JNCC

- Review of JNCC's remit / role needed
- 'Joint' Links could provide a UK overview of the situation

### Biodiversity taskforces

- Are there taskforces in each country?
- Biodiversity 'UK issues' task force could meet on a regular basis, with focus on the JNCC

### Issues relating to use of funding

- Species / special sites vs landscapes
- Levering funding from other departments
- Gaps in funding sources
- Role of natural processes
- Long term monitoring / research

### UK / Local

- LBAPS
- Refocus on UK priorities – Links' role
- As a supportive mechanism

### Intra-Link issues

- Conflicts between members interests e.g. biodiversity vs renewable energy
- Integration of issues

### Delivery mechanisms

- Projects
- Policies
- Incentives
- Legislation
- Planning

#### Suggested actions

- More effective use of the EU
- Identify UK biodiversity taskforce members and the issues to discuss
- After the JNCC review, form 'Joint Links' position on the future of the biodiversity process
- Convenor of the WCL biodiversity task force could lead

### **Workshop 3 - Climate change and energy**

#### Issues and Actions

- Micro-generation – at different stages in different countries
- Biomass - WCL agri-group commissioned report and guidance – could be circulated to the Joint Links and used to produce a Joint Links briefing paper
- Planning policy –collect and circulate best practice across all the Links' planning working groups
- Kyoto protocol / Nairobi; Climate Change Bill
- Fiscal measures - green taxes, carbon trading

#### Taskforce work

- Links – WEL, NIEL, WCL – could set up own climate groups for UK issues only
- Ask each Link taskforce to submit issues and ideas and then set up a Joint Links task force, coordinated at Joint Links level
- Lobbying could be done by members of the task forces
- SEL climate group could lead
- Would create added value when targeting own MPs and Assemblies

#### Suggested actions

- Link to go to Stop Climate Chaos on behalf of smaller organisations to say tariff is too high, but keen to join
- Form a Joint Links task force
- Put together a list of asks at biannual Joint Links event on climate e.g. green taxes should be hypothecated, with money from mitigation going into adaptation

### **Workshop 4 - Engaging with statutory bodies**

(Only WEL and NIEL represented in the workshop group)

#### Process of engagement

- Elected / government level
- AMs and MPs
- Senior government officials – heads of departments
- Middle-ranking civil servants (who write the briefings and papers)
- Assembly appointed/elected bodies
- Knowing when to go where (balance of access and influence)

#### Partnerships and Compacts

- Environmental Compact in Wales
- National Links – provide pathway for wider range of organisations to engage effectively with the statutory sector

#### Joint Links

- Opportunities on certain issues where UK-wide or pre-publication of a Bill e.g. UK Climate Change Bill



## **Workshop 5 - Sustainable development**

### Issues

- Need for clarification as to what SD is about
- Environmental limits
  - Links into key policy across the UK
  - Links to David Milliband's support for 'One Planet Living'
- Getting the environmental agenda across within the SD language / context
- Redefining the environment as the context in which the economy and society work
- Environmental economy

### What is SD?

- SD is living within the means of the earth's resources
- Triple bottom line
- One Planet Living

### Environmental limits

- Resources – globally, regionally, locally
- Energy demand
- Land use demand
- SE England – Water

### Environmental economy

- The economic impacts of environmental activity
- Need to engage with the language of the economy, whilst still promoting the intrinsic value of the environment

### Role of the Links

- Link speaking for the environmental part of the agenda, making sure that there is a strong voice
- Doing this but not speaking in the right language of the SD agenda
- Not all regions have a task group on SD – SEL and NIEL have
- All task groups are probably addressing SD issue but these are not being brought together
- Need to look at what we do now and re-package it

### Issues that are the most appropriate to work towards at UK /Joint Links level

- Sustainable land use
- Environmental enhancement
- Environmental economy
- Sustainable consumption e.g. products such as FSC, organic produce
- Integration between two sides: biodiversity and consumption – pull the two together
- Making better links to the climate change agenda – Stop Climate Chaos
- Helping people realise that SD is something that we are all part of
- Promoting local and regional actions at the UK level, sharing good practice

### Suggested actions

- Form a UK-wide SD taskforce that has an overview
- Ask what are the existing task forces doing in the SD agenda, and coordinate this with one regional representation
- Half term report on how they are doing on the 'environment' pillar
- Critique of the UK SD strategy

## **Agreed actions**

- Working groups to share their work plans with equivalent groups in other Links via the Link Directors – WORKING GROUP CHAIRS / LINK DIRECTORS
- Joint Links UK biodiversity group and WEL Biodiversity Working Group to be set up – LINK DIRECTORS / BIODIVERSITY GROUP CHAIRS
- Joint Links UK Biodiversity Group to request meeting with JNCC – WCL / CHAIR OF JOINT LINKS UK BIO GROUP (ONCE FORMED)
- Joint Links to meet again in two years time – LINK DIRECTORS
- Link Chairs to meet on a regular basis – LINK CHAIRS
- Scottish LINK to look into possibility of leading a Joint Links Climate group to encourage Links to mutually inform each other – SEL