



## LINK Network meeting note, 9 August 2012, held at the LINK Perth office

Attending: Deborah Long (Plantlife, LINK Chair), Dan Barlow (WWF Scotland, Economics Forum), Dave Fairlamb (WWT, FWTF), Jonathan Wordsworth (Arch Scot, ATF, LTF, SLUTF), Mary Church (FoES, Legal Gov Group), Davina Shiell (FoES), Helen Todd (LINK Trustee, RA), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Roger Powell (SCRA), Diarmid Hearn (NTS), Eilidh Nicolson (NTS), Helen McDade (JMT, LTF, Governance Group), Aedán Smith (RSPB, convenor Planning TF), Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers) Lloyd Austin (RSPB Scotland, Convenor Governance Group), Ross Finnie (President), Sarah Archer & Nick Underdown (LINK Marine Project officers) Jen Anderson, Rea Andy Myles, Alice Walsh (LINK staff).

### 1. Intros and Apologies

Apologies were received from: John Mayhew (APRS, LTF), Jonny Hughes (Scottish Wildlife Trust), Bill McDermott (SCNP), Alison Connolly (SEFF), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG), Steve Gardner (SEFF), Vicki Swales (SLUTF), Jim Densham (CATF), Calum Duncan (MCS, MTF), Sarah Dolman (WDCS), Ian Findlay (LINK Trustee), Angus Yarwood (WTS).

### 2. Horizon Scanning.

- a. Political agenda, focusses, likely developments Andy Myles noted how political discourse is dominated by the referenced, our *Referendum Challenge* has been produced, he had met the SNP researcher and was awaiting response from the various campaigns. The RC paper is a 'shield' enabling members to keep the focus on sustainability issues whilst government is without an environmental focus. In the current circumstances it was lively positive developments would be small scale. Lloyd Austin added that all politics is taking place in the context of the Global, EU financial situation and UK budget.
- b. Relevant forthcoming legislation
  - Sustainable Procurement will be open to public consultation shortly. Sustainability quotient is queriable; mostly to do with cost. Andy Myles keeping track via SCCS where chair Tom Ballantine is part of a SG task group, and is open to input from member bodies.
  - Community Empowerment: our briefings were distributed. The bill is mainly about assets, may be useful in parts though does not go far enough. LINK may need to form a temporary Bill Team.
  - Action: Andy Myles to contact interested members.**
  - Freedom of Information Bill: some member bodies may be interested. No LINK action proposed.
  - Aquaculture Bill and Water Bill on the powers and structures of Scottish Water: **FWTF and MTF members on both.**
  - Private members bill in Westminster on limiting lobbying and in the process of registering lobbyists from NGOs. WWF keeping a watch (contact Eva Groeneveld).
  - Better Regulation Agenda: 2 bills one on SEPA powers and other on red tape reduction (Fergus Ewing). Not clear whether they will be dovetailed. LINK FWTF leading on the SEPA one for LINK; may need a group to look at wider ramifications, further. **Action: Andy Myles**
  - Angus Yarwood looking at implications for Scottish forestry of action in England & Wales; opportunities to tie in with Governance Matters and Land Use Strategy in Scotland; this will benefit from wider discussion when Angus' draft paper ready. **Action: Angus**
  - SNP to announce new legislative programme in September.
  - Water Resources Bill FWTF working on this for LINK with MTF input – Contact Lisa Webb.
- c. European and international dimensions

Jonny Hughes and Clifton Bain will be attending the IUCN congress in Korea. LINK materials will be distributed there.

Civilscape, of which LINK is a member, are lobbying well on European Landscape Convention.

### 3. Evaluations (first two based on written submissions from Andy Myles and Deborah Long).

#### LINK Election Review 2011/2012

For the first time LINK played a part in local government elections in Scotland, which had been separated from national election timing. The LINK effort followed the familiar pattern of advocacy engagement between elections, pre-election policy advocacy with the parties, and small-scale interventions during the parties' intensive campaigning period. Involvement began with the formation of the LINK Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) Task Force in 2008/9 and the strategic

decisions at the Board and Network meetings to become more involved in local government delivery of environmental legislation. This led to several LINK publications, the building of contacts across the local government scene, and to a submission to the Christie Commission on the reform of public services.

SOATF undertook pre-election planning in 2011 and decided on the production of an early LINK Manifesto for the elections, launched in the Autumn and pursued with the political parties, all of whom were extremely reticent about the production of their own manifestoes at national level. Much advocacy effort was concentrated on cajoling the politicians into making policy plans for the elections. In parallel, local policy suggestions and positions were gathered together from members and Task Forces as a layer of the project to create the LINK Rolling Manifesto. This allowed LINK staff to pull together our manifesto with relative ease, on the new Rolling manifesto model for the first time, geared to the parties' own broader policy spectrum rather than a recapitulation of the LINK structure of Task Force work. We unified the Manifesto's parts by adding an SOA commentary and a narrative on preventative spending.

The approach of the parties and the media to the elections in 2012 was less than passionate or full-hearted. Few sections of civic Scotland bothered to engage in election dialogue. Only a very small number of LINK members engaged in arranging 'hustings' meetings or 'climate café' events. LINK itself organised none and concentrated on two 'e-actions', hosted on the FOES site. Only WWF put together a comprehensive approach or election 'campaign'.

LINK's election effort was based on an assumption that elections are sensitive times and that our work is best done between elections. We concentrated on using the election period to shape the policy agenda, rather than intervening in the campaigning itself.

Questions: Helen McDade asked whether LINK guidance not to invite Independent candidates to hustings was sound, given that their increase was partly in response to the lack of policies from the parties. The guidance was based on the practicality of organising events and would be re-examined for future elections. **Action: Andy Myles and Parliamentary Forum**

#### Inspire Environment event 26 June at the Parliament.

The Inspire Environment event at Holyrood raised the profile of the environment both in Holyrood and with our target audiences of artists, creative networks, funders and parliamentarians. The Wildlife Proclamation and Inspire Environment events were completed successfully and have built a strong foundation for further engagement at Holyrood and with artists and creative organisations. 33 MSPs have signed the proclamation to date and 110 attendees at the event, 10 of which were MSPs. This event has helped the TF reach new partners and the interest generated, and the contacts made, will be helpful in maintaining a place for the environment, outside of the usual environment box. Inspiring artists to use the environment as their inspiration and providing them with contacts for future work has been very useful and will continue to reap benefits.

The TF is struggling with low energy levels and impetus for continued policy work on biodiversity. This event served to inspire others outside the network although TF members were not all represented. The burden of biodiversity policy to date has meant TF organisations have put their energies elsewhere.

The messages behind the Wildlife Proclamation and the Inspire Environment event were supported by all active members of the TF. It was useful to agree general, if somewhat obvious, messages for the Proclamation. These messages will continue to be used in work with parliamentarians to remind them of their commitment and to encourage them to be involved in future awareness raising activities. The use of a wider forum, created with arts and culture colleagues was extremely useful in widening out interest in the Inspire Environment event beyond the usual supporters at Holyrood.

The priority given to biodiversity policy is currently low, as a result of the burdensome process govt has adopted to date. The TF needs to find the energy to bring new and practical ideas to the table, which unless we can persuade govt to act upon, will mean that the TF will continue to struggle to exist and will need to find different ways of working.

The funding (£2,500, with £950 later towards the event) was used to create and launch the Wildlife Proclamation in 2010 ahead of the election. One year on the Proclamation was reinvigorated with an invitation to attend our Inspire Environment event at Holyrood and to meet a wide variety of artists, musicians and craft people who are all inspired by the environment. Neither activity would have happened without DPF support. The event in particular was very valuable and effective in raising the profile of the environment amongst a new audience (artists

etc) and at Holyrood from a new direction. The alignment of LINK with different artistic individuals and organisations added legitimacy and gave the event an energy that was new and very much welcomed by all who attended. Feedback has been very positive and the new contacts made with MSPs are being used to build more support for the environment in Holyrood.

The combined approach of a Proclamation, with the Event was invaluable in building support in new quarters both at Holyrood and beyond for LINK's work. The new contacts and relationships these activities have enabled us to build are going to be extremely useful in gaining new champions for the environment at Holyrood.

The TF is now receiving invaluable support from Andy Myles, and Julia Harrison from RSPB, which is reaping benefits in profile and effectiveness at Holyrood. This is a very welcome change to the way the TF works and is a key part of a new approach to influencing policy making, starting with our response to the review on the biodiversity strategy and using Holyrood to make that review more effective.

#### Rio + 20 Initiative

Jen Anderson reported on this, based on Jonny Hughes' earlier verbal report to the Board. The [Flourishing Scotland](#) document prepared by a wider alliance on which JH represented LINK had been supported by an allocation of £910 from the DPF. The report was well received, an event in the Parliament on 29 May was oversubscribed, and LINK among others was thanked in the debate on sustainable development in the Parliament the following day. The group was instrumental in ensuring a Scottish presence at Rio. Though the summit itself is regarded as a damp squib, there was some useful progress with business interests in valuing natural capital. There is some follow up in Scotland with CIFAL (one of the partners) now operating in Edinburgh, and a secondee from BT working at SNIFFER to progress the agenda agreed by the steering group, on which J Hughes continues to participate. The agenda covers the beyond GDP agenda, Scotland's voice in development/international issues (where it has a good reputation), and ecocide, which has the potential to take forward Aarhus issues if linked to the human rights agenda.

#### **4. Task Forces catch up** *with focus on the coming quarter, campaigning plans, integration and coordination needs, events, opportunities, resource needs ahead.*

**Agriculture:** JW reported, busy with SRDP and its 8 working groups on which RSPB and LINK are represented. All reports are on the discussion forum on the LINK members website (username: scotlink, password b10diversity), it all hangs on EU legislation changes and has an EU Parliament dimension. There are over 7,000 amendments laid. It is expected that greening will be reduced, due to dominance of the agricultural interests; MEPs are an important target for lobbying across the EU. TF is working with WCL (English Link), and Julie Middleton is coming to Scotland next week to meet JW. Though capacity issues are understood JW recommends that members take an interest and get in touch. Bruce Wilson (SWT) is leading on the campaigning side and will produce a briefing with remaining DPF funding. There is good interrelation with SLUTF.

**Climate Adaptation:** The TF has planned a seminar for 4 September which will be facilitated by Simon Pepper who is contracted to write the report. The event has been circulated widely across LINK and a good attendance is needed to ensure our report is the best it can be. The SGov process is weak, and needs our input.

**Deer:** no TF members present.

**Economics:** Dan Barlow reported that Simon's final draft of the paper on a flourishing Scotland is now in and will be circulated to members, and decisions made on advocacy work. More finance may be required for design, though member bodies may be able to contribute. He suggested we could feed this in now to debates on economics (eg Future of Scotland debate) and aim to launch our paper around party conference time. Ross Finnie was concerned at the drift to 'business as usual'. Dan indicated that the forum is keen that the message from the environment sector chimes well with others, reinforcing their messages. The report will form part of the agenda for the LINK-CBI Scotland meeting being organised (2 October).

**Freshwater:** Dave Fairlamb reported. The TF co-ordinated a response to the SEPA/ SGovt Environmental Regulation consultation. Water Resources Bill was introduced in June and the lead Committee on the Bill (Infrastructure and Capital Investment) has issued a call for evidence. The Taskforce will submit written evidence. Lisa Webb is doing this for RSPB so should be able to draft something for comment from LINK members before the deadline of 3 September.

Consultation is out until 11 September on the next water industry investment period, which basically dictates how SW will be funded to deliver water and wastewater services in compliance with the relevant legislation from 2015 until 2025. TFC sent email around LINK (Freshwater TF and some marine people) to say that this consultation is out and that Govt is very keen to hear views from LINK. As a reminder, it was within this current investment period that SW got funding to deliver sustainable land management - so it can potentially deliver things we're keen on and therefore worth us putting our views across. A useful meeting with SEPA and CBI was held on Better Regulation, a [note](#) is on the members' website.

**Governance:** Mary Church reported on Legal issues. LINK responded to the consultation on Protected Expenses Orders and had a good meeting with civil servants from the Justice Directorate. The Directorate needs more liaison with NGOs, Mary is meeting them again on 6/9 ahead of the publication of draft Rules, and will feed back on that. FoES is awaiting research on environmental courts, what might work in Scotland, to tie into SNP manifesto commitment to publish an options paper. The Group signed up to the Gill Reforms response, and will spend DPF money sending Frances McCartney to Brussels for talks. Andy Myles noted that though a very technical issue, it was very important for all member bodies to be able to test the law at an affordable price; he plans to produce a plain English briefing. Mary would like to be involved (though not lead) on any exploration of the Better Regulation (F Ewing) legislation.

**Landscape:** Helen McDade reported (as memory served). The TF's energy statement has undergone 4 versions and was agreed by some members present at the last LTF meeting after which Helen had thought it would go to the Board. Jen confirmed that the paper was awaited and would inform discussion at an energy workshop to be organised by LINK in the autumn. John Mayhew (LTF Convenor) wished to pursue NTS sign-off in late August, after which it was understood that the LTF would meet to finalise and release the paper to the Board. Helen (as JMT) was pleased there was a timetable on holding a wider LINK meeting based on the paper. JMT (and others) are very concerned at the density of existing and proposed turbines. Peat disturbance is an issue, as is the commercial strategy. JMT has plenty of expertise and will be happy to contribute to a workshop. Andy Myles observed that the process for member bodies signing up to outputs was often complex, 21 bodies actively supported the Referendum Challenge leaflet, while others did not object; he suggested it would be helpful if member bodies had procedures in place to arrange their sign-up to LINK documents. Eddie Palmer noted that the energy situation is a free for all, with no concern for tourism, and no long term planning. Helen reminded members that LINK's early campaigns had strong landscape elements to their 'case' (Lingerabay, Funicular). **Action: LTF sign off statement; LINK organise autumn workshop**

**Local Governance (newly disbanded):** Jen Anderson reported that owing to reduced capacity and energy, the LGTF had decided to disband, having completed its original tasks of putting the spotlight on local delivery of national environmental commitments. The TF had also coordinated the 2011/12 local elections work, and subsequently briefed MSPs and local Councillors on LINK's concerns. There might be need or even the will to regroup to audit the next round of Single Outcome Agreements possibly in 2014.

**Marine:** Sarah Archer reported that there has been a slight shift of emphasis for the Marine Officers who will focus on Marine Protected Areas and the National Marine Plan. TF members will lead on other issues and the MPAOs will refer enquiries to them. The TF is releasing a short film and re-launching the Save our Seas website campaigning on MPAs towards the end of the month and will be asking people to use social media to spread the word. This is a once in a generation opportunity to get it right. **Action: MTF and member bodies**

The Sustainable Procurement Bill will address packaging and waste including an option to ban plastic carrier bags, which MCS supports. The Zero Waste Agenda has little input from LINK, other than Dan Barlow who is delegate on the ZWS programme board. He noted that there is little pressure from NGOs to use resources more carefully and that it would be useful for organisations to positively support some of these measures. **Action: Members will have opportunity to sign up to position drafted by MCS, WWFS, RSPB**

The TF will input to the Wildlife Forum's response to the Biodiversity Strategy consultation. The consultation on the National Marine Plan will be out in November. The TF will talk to relevant member bodies in forming its response.

The Aquaculture and Fisheries bill will be introduced in the autumn and on this the MTF and FWTF are liaising, with Alex Kinninmonth of SWT sitting on both TFs.

There is informal consultation on marine renewables during August and September with consultation at venues round the country which may be relevant to LINK members' interests.

The Marine Spatial Plan (a hefty doc) may be of interest, Sarah can circulate more widely.

**Action: Sarah Archer**

**National Parks** The TF is awaiting the outcome of the legal challenge which is late.

**Planning** Aedán Smith reported on a good recent TF meeting, with SGov on the verge of integrating agriculture and forestry tracks within the planning system, with LINK and others including the National Park Authorities encouraging SG to stick to their guns on this. He reminded members of the value of writing an encouraging letter to the Minister. **Action: Member bodies** The process for forming the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Planning Framework, which is the national spatial strategy for the next 20-25 years had begun, with SGov keen to get views on how to consult better this time round. The TF meeting had given some input on consultation at its last meeting which SGov attended, and would meet again on 20 September, to consider positive content. Helen McDade noted that despite excellent input on the Planning Act, MSPs were not interested and the Committee did not understand complex issues; she felt the lesson for NGOs was to think more strategically - National Developments were not challengeable on the basis of need, which they should be – and this would be considered at the PTF meeting.

**SEFF** No TF members were present to give a report on this task force's work or direction.

**Sustainable Land Use:** Jonathan Wordsworth reported. LINK report 'How can we get the best from our land?' was launched at the stakeholder event in June. The SLU process requires considerable support from LINK to keep it live. A briefing for MSPs will be prepared for 6-8 weeks' time. Andy Myles noted that the forthcoming forestry shake-up may be an opportunity to bring forestry along sustainable land use lines. Jen Anderson reported that at recent LINK meetings with the Minister and Bob Macintosh (head of SG's environment and forestry depts.) both were at pains to underscore their commitment to embedding SLU principles across relevant policy areas including planning.

**Wildlife Forum** This was mostly covered in the evaluation section above. A meeting on 15 August would focus on LINK's response to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy consultation. *Update: Deborah Long has circulated this in draft to all TFs for input by early September.*

**Woodlands:** Andy Myles reported that Angus Yarwood would convene a meeting on 24 September, among other things looking to progress a paper proposing new arrangements for forestry in Scotland; this might merit a workshop for wider discussion amongst the network.

**Action: WoF to keep wider membership informed**

## 5. Other Updates

- a. **Commonwealth Games greening process:** Jonny Hughes had put this on the agenda but had been unable to stay on to speak to the item. He would be asked to update via email. Ramblers were interested in legacy on health and activity, an RS project on Medal Routes: short circular routes on existing paths. If member bodies were interested or could assist with paths, please contact [Helen Todd](#) for more details. **Actions: Jonny to update; Members to contact Helen if interested**
- b. **Member updates**
  - Friends of the Earth: FoES was shrinking owing to financial difficulties which impacted their ability to contribute in LINK. There will be 4.5 permanent staff plus some project staff. Policy capacity will be very limited in the new structure which will allow for work on a couple of campaigns at a time. A director will be recruited towards the year end, and the board is also working on an organisational strategy.
  - Ramblers Scotland: see under a above.
  - Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society: Working on an online site design guide; the main barriers to new allotments are in planning system; local groups have land available and are unsure how to proceed. SAGS are inputting to the consultant.
  - Scottish Countryside Rangers Association: Continuing with the professional development programme and the junior ranger project.
  - Archaeology Scotland: September is Scottish Archaeology Month, details now on [website](#)
  - John Muir Trust: Temporarily moved to Perth from Pitlochry as a new exhibition centre is built in Pitlochry. Recruiting for a manager for that; opening spring next year. Working on wild land.
  - RSPB Scotland: Recently recruited Charles Nathan as a marine conservation planner.

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust: Producing a business strategy for the next 5 years. Hoping to be more effective within LINK.

WWF Scotland In the midst of strategic review impacting on work in Scotland. There is a declining focus on the UK domestic agenda. Main emphases here on climate and marine – fisheries policy, delivery on climate act commitments, and impacts on operations will be clearer in the next few months.

National Trust for Scotland Eilidh Nicolson is new policy officer, a 33% increase in capacity. Public opinion survey had said NTS should be more active on advocacy. Planning with SNH and others a landscape conference in November - 50 years of landscape change. Working on MPAs. Engaged in relation to a petition on productive land in Scottish Parliament, challenging the notion that land set aside for conservation is not productive.

Scottish Badgers Is experiencing major difficulties in effective communications from the Wildlife Crime unit to the voluntary sector resulting in a lack of intelligence and members of the public confronting criminals without backup. Lack of interest from top level police is an issue in some areas. Working with SSPCA and Onekind behind scenes to try to improve the situation, and have tabled PQs. Will keep members posted. Eddie thanked LINK staff for useful advice – there as a resource for member bodies.

Plantlife Launching a State of Plants report across the UK, and pulling Scottish information out of that. Running an event with JMT on oceanic heath.

**LINK Congress Update:** 22 November. Theme is contribution of NGOs and business sectors to sustainable development. Aiming to build relationships between the sectors. Workshops on transport, energy, food & drink and drivers for change, each co-led by LINK and business rep. Ian Marchant speaking on the business perspective alongside LINK for the NGO perspective. Programme will be circulated shortly. **Action: Alice Walsh**

**c. Ministerial meeting 14 November; Building alliances with wider policy community**

CAP and SRDP, Hilltracks and Government funding for the sector are on the agenda. Members were asked to contact Jen if they wished to attend. It was agreed that the MTF should try for a separate meeting on MPAs to get best value.

LINK was making some allies through Governance work, and Ross Finnie plus a delegation would shortly be meeting CBIS.

**d. Refresh of LINK strategy & action plan.** The strategy would be circulated in early September along with an action plan for its implementation. The documents reflected feedback from the member and external surveys of early 2012, and a board discussion of May about key areas for a change in emphasis; as agreed with members last year, the three strategic objectives for LINK remained unchanged. **Action: Staff**

## 6. AOB

**Transport issues** Helen Todd asked, re gaps identified last November, there was interest in a forum for members on active travel, to have a means for interested members to identify each other for actions such as 2011's letter to John Swinney. There are various ad hoc groupings on some issues, like climate, though rely on staff to ensure relevant members are aware. It may be useful to discuss a mechanism at strategic planning, eg the Woodland Forum model in LINK.

**Action: For strategic planning agenda**

**SNH Chair:** LINK had in the past put in ideas for SNH chair. There has been correspondence on the process to reappoint Andrew Thin in which LINK had proposed that SGovt take soundings from the sector. It was established that members were interested in contributing on criteria and guidelines, and that LINK should coordinate input to SGovt in early 2013. **Action: Staff & Members**

**Scottish Environment Week 2013** Planning going well, members would be canvassed for constituency visits shortly. This fitted in well with the Wildlife Forum's advocacy strategy regarding wildlife champions among MSPs.

**World Ranger Day 31 July:** There is a list on the SCRA website of over 60 rangers worldwide who have been killed in the line of duty.

**Healthy Environment Network:** Froglife have offered to represent LINK on the steering committee, probably via a new Froglife recruit starting shortly in Glasgow.