

## **Note of Scottish Environment LINK Network meeting held on 15 August at the LINK Officer, Perth.**

**Attending:** Deborah Long (Chair, Plantlife, Wildlife Forum), Chrissie Valluri (SWLG), Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers, Wildlife Crime TF Convenor), Simon Jones (Trustee, SWT), Jonathan Wordsworth (Archaeology Scotland, Agriculture TFC, Landscape Depute Convenor), Vicki Swales (RSPB, Sustainable Land Use TFC), Helen McDade (JMT), Mike Daniels (JMT, Deer TFdc), Lisa Webb (RSPB, Freshwater TFC), John Mayhew (APRS), Bruce Wilson (SWT, Planning TFdc), Charles Strang (APRS/SCNP, National Parks TFdc), Calum Duncan (MCS, Marine TFC), Beryl Leatherland (Trustee, SWLG, Hilltracks Campaign co-ordinator), Craig Macadam (Buglife, Wildlife Forum dc), Ross Finnie, (LINK President) Jen Anderson (LINK CO), Andy Myles (LINK PO), Alice Walsh (LINK DO), Lawrance Ferns (LINK MPAO).

**Apologies:** Aedan Smith (Planning TFC), Andrew Fairbairn (WTS), Eilidh Nicolson (NTS), John Thomson (Landscape TFC), Jim Densham (Climate Adaptation TFC), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Alistair Beeley (NEMT), Sam Gardner (WWF), Jonny Hughes (advisor on EU/IUCN issues), Helen Todd (Trustee, Ramblers, Land group TFC), Rea Cris (LINK staff).

1. **Updates** outstanding updates from the April meeting would be picked up in other items. Deborah gave an update from that morning's Board meeting:

The new **reporting proforma for taskforces** was approved, and had been circulated to TF convenors in advance for comments. The form has multiple purposes; assessing progress against our strategic objectives, reporting to our funders, and to the network. It will be very important to get good input when requested at the end of September. The form is longer than the previous version though needs to be completed, twice, rather than four times a year. **Action: TF convenors, staff**

Our **fundraising strategy** is being pursued, investigating new opportunities. LINK has entered into partnership with other networks for a **£484k HLF Catalyst bid**, which seeks funding for fundraising training. Members are encouraged to complete the survey which seeks to determine our sector's needs by 25 June, and to attend the SEFF meeting on 5 Sept if possible. **Organisational and Business Supporter** affiliation is being gradually rolled out as opportunities arise. There is space to host other organisations in the Perth office which is advertised; LINK is in a positive financial situation, looking steady.

Our approach to the **Referendum** is paying off, and been used as an exemplar for the sector by OSCR. We have a response from Better Together, pursuing Yes Scotland for their response. Calum noted that this work has been very useful to MCS, much appreciated.

A new group focussing on **Wildlife Crime** has been established, led by Eddie Palmer.

**Congress** plans are developing – building better bridges with communities of place.

LINK has been invited to join the Public Sector Climate Leaders Forum. The Board has proposed Sam Gardner as rep, with a remit to report back to and get input from a LINK 'constituency of interest' comprising members and TFs. **Jen will be sending an email round.**

Work continues on the '**Sustainable Economic Growth**' and 'Sustainable Development' issue, mainly through Andy Myles' and the Regulatory Reform Bill Team.

The Board discussed the **charities sector**, in particular new charities set up by Government, and differentiating between them, strategy to be discussed by the **Governance Group** which would meet the following week.

SEPA wants to engage our sector in **Scotland's Environment Web**, an email was circulated before this meeting. We have had capacity difficulties and disengaged from the steering group. Comments were invited from the meeting, in additions to responses received from 5 member bodies, and it was agreed that there was no capacity to engage as LINK. There

were opportunities for members on some issues, eg to advertise their citizen science projects. Members should contact Jo Muse at SEPA if interested.

Following the 2012 Congress plans to build new **relationships with business** continue, priority is a meeting with the investment sector. It would be useful to get suggestions for those to invite, and also for member bodies to participate in meeting. (MCS interested). Discretionary Project Funding has been allocated for 2013-14 except for £1,300. TFs could begin thinking of their needs for 2014-15.

The Board agreed to trial the *Friends of the Scotsman* subscription for 2 years, coordinated by staff, who will invite TFs in the main to provide and sign off articles, and smaller member bodies.

## 2. Horizon scanning, updates, impact of recent effort, and areas for integration

TFs were asked to look ahead with regard to need for input from other TFs and need for additional resources.

**Agriculture:** has awarded the contract to Richard Lockett for its project to set out network vision for the agriculture programme. **The workshop for members is planned for 18 September.** A joint meeting with the Wildlife Forum is planned for 21/8. TF was still heavily engaged in all the stakeholder working groups, trying to get the best possible outcomes. The commissioned report should give more substance for advocacy on the public benefit for public money issue – want more £s for Rural Development and Agri-environment measures, much opposition and need to mobilise others beyond active ATF members. This may be joint letter or other action, a call to come from ATF. Next SRDP consultation coming November, (one done already, consultation on CAP due January. Lots of consultation, lots of work. Amy Corrigan (depute convenor) will be going on leave, so capacity will be reduced. Resource needs: advice on advocacy and keeping agriculture on the agenda with the Environment Minister. Ross advised the TF to keep the pressure on the Cabinet Secretary for also for further meetings. **Jonathan and Vicki to keep staff in loop.**

**Climate Adaptation:** The Adaptation Framework consultation is out. The TF will be discussing government's low-key approach to it.

**Deer:** A meeting with interests beyond the TF was due on Monday. The Forest Estate has done a consultation. SWT and JMT had taken Rob Gibson on a site visit recently to show him the issues on the ground. Hill tracks and wildlife crime concerns are related, as is the Westminster [Scottish Affairs Ctte Inquiry](#) into tax breaks for landowners, a [briefing](#) on the topic published by A Wightman, J Hunter, P Peacock & M Foxley, and lairds use of Human Rights legislation. Andy Myles encouraged members to keep in touch with any information relating to the wider topic. Mike Daniels noted that there are subtleties between the views of landowning NGOs and other NGOs. Eddie Palmer noted that the Land Reform Review Group decided not to deal with Access, who put it to the National Access Forum, who declined to comment as they were a non-statutory body. LINK's former work on deer, and the work of the Forest Policy Group on deer, were relevant. **Members would be updated on the outcomes of Mondays meeting.**

**Economics:** August meeting considered how to follow on from Simon Pepper's report. One big issue is the duty under the Regulatory Reform Bill to promote sustainable economic growth. LINK gave evidence to the EET and RACCE cttes, with backing from RACCE for our position in its report, though EET is the lead ctte. SEG also features in the revised Scottish Planning Policy, and features in the consultation on the National Marine Plan. Andy Myles has let government advisers know that LINK will not back down on this issue. This is one area

LINK is in direct conflict with Government. LINK is working with Oxfam, STUC, SCVO and the Environmental Law Society to persuade Government to drop the clause. Meetings with business groups are proceeding with a meeting on fracking/unconventional gas coming up with the Weir Group. Andy commented that there is growing recognition across the policy community that our agenda re growth is making an impact, and noted that all TFs have an economics aspect; we should keep all informed and use Simon's report to make our points. LINK is responding to the Finance Ctte's call for evidence on the National Performance Framework, and hopes to update the 2011 [briefing by FoeS, WWF, Oxfam](#). It was noted we must be careful of leakage between our aims for an improved NPF and SEG's supplanting of sustainable development, which civil servants now consider interchangeable. Ross noted that government was not interested in relevant work by the Officer for National Statistics on wellbeing. It was agreed that we could allocate a slot in Friends of the Scotsman on Simon's report.

**Freshwater:** Dave Fairlamb (WWT and depute convenor) was leaving his job shortly and his replacement unlikely to be engaged. This was now mainly a corresponding forum as active participants were Lisa and Alex Kinninmonth, both participate in the RRB bill team, helping Andy with minor amendments as it progresses. Looking ahead members will be inputting to Scottish Water's strategic vision. Occasional input may be needed ad hoc from other TFs (Marine, Land Use, Agriculture).

**Governance:** group meeting on 21/8 to discuss next steps with Referendum Challenge, the issue of blurred boundaries between NGO charities and those set up to deliver government objectives, among other issues.

**Land:** Next step is to organise a meeting, potentially also with Andy Wightman to discuss common ground. **Will keep Wildlife Crime, Hill tracks, Deer and Sustainable Land Use members informed.**

**Landscape:** The TF would meet on 22/8. Last meeting in May both Planning and Landscape TFS focus was on NPF3 and the SPP, in particular the windfarm policy, backed it after some discussion. Landscape protection is about more than windfarms. The Hilltracks campaign was going well, would meet to discuss progress on 22/8. Material received needs to be evaluated for the report after cutoff date 1/9. The Minister was invited to walk with Cameron McNeish – still in negotiation. Helen Todd's [article for the Friends of the Scotsman](#) was very good. SNH has asked the TF to suggest topics for its Landscape Research agenda – will be meeting the TF shortly. Andy suggested Fracking/UG and Coal restoration bonds. The FUG briefing was circulated to MSPs and members were invited to sign up to it at any time. Helen McDade asked about the process of FUG becoming a LINK issue; it had been identified in previous horizon scanning, discussed at Strategic Planning and at the April Network meeting, which had agreed the need for a briefing.

**Marine:** The big and important consultations on the National Marine Plan, and Marine Protected Areas were for consultation until 13/11. Getting all MPA proposals consulted on at the same time was a success. The consultation on Priority Marine Features (renewables) is also out. The extra capacity for 2 project officers is in place until November, and still awaiting a decision from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for the next 3 years. Workshops for TF members to be held on 21 & 23 August to digest all. Save Scottish Seas website is evolving, getting positive stories out, and hoping to do a Google Earth based webmap to inform responses to the consultation for the wider membership and site visitors. The TF has fed back to CATF on the Adaptation Framework. Non TF members are welcome to support

/sign up. On renewables there will be issues that need wider discussion among members, some potentially contentious. Some of the MPA proposals overlap with leasing sites and there is concern about industry pressure. **Expertise and input from other TFs would be welcome on offshore wind wave and tidal.** Marine Scotland seem receptive to the document evolving into a better programme for stakeholders to engage with, at present it is more of a discussion paper, and EIAs are not well covered. In terms of sustainable development principles, it will be important to have consistent messaging on sustainable economic growth. The TF is in the process of coming up with 3 'asks' The TF got the RACCE cttee to look at the numbers of MPAs in detail before the consultation came out, which has been valuable. Calum will alert staff where there are opportunities for non MTF to contribute. The EFF decision will be known in September –provision for two 4-day a week posts for 3 years.

**National Parks:** There has been one meeting which discussed the APRA/SCNP report Unfinished Business, for which there is broad support within the TF. Proposals for new NPs were omitted from the NPF3/SPP. SCNP will be meeting the Minister on 5/9. **If Planning TF has a meeting with the Planning Minister, this could be raised.**

**Planning:** mainly covered in previous discussions. Responses to the NPF3 / SPP consultations majored on SEG. There were divergent views on fracking between members who agreed on a 2km buffer zone, which for practical purposes excludes any site. The proposal for a National Ecological Network did not get in. SWT would be taking this forward. SWT and RSPB will object to opencast coal if there is no clear bonding for restoration, an issue to be discussed at the next TF meeting. Resource needs – Economics TF on SEG, and, ad hoc support on the NEN.

**Parliamentary Forum:** Informally keeping a degree of coordination and mutual support, and all are welcome. John Muir anniversary has been suggested as a theme for Scottish Environment Festival 2014.

**Scottish Environment Fundraisers Forum:** mainly covered above under board reports. SEFF offers informal support to fundraisers in the sector, all are welcome to meetings, next meeting 5/9.

**Sustainable Land Use:** was active up to publication of the SLU strategy. Has a strong overlap with ATF at this point needs to think about what we might want to do. Now coming up to mid-point of the 5 year strategy. There are capacity issues. There are 2 regional LU pilots in Aberdeenshire and in the Borders, which attempt to look at LU in the round in their areas. It is not yet clear what the product will be. Vicki Swales represents the TF on the Aberdeenshire steering group, which first meets on 19/9. An RSPB local officer is involved in the Borders, which the Tweed Forum is running. Though it has not asked for LINK representation it may engage some members. Jen asked it was likely to cover issues such as deer discussed earlier? Not yet clear whether the product will be visionary statement or indicative plan; the James Hutton Institute will be involved. Aberdeenshire will seek data on the area from members. Vicki will liaise with staff to ensure the request is circulated. Andy commented that we need to keep pushing the land use strategy as it was our idea, and the ATF and SLUS TFs should be disengaged. This could be done if more members were engaged, and everyone is so busy. The ATF project will bring in SLU, there was a meeting on the LUS in July, a series of case study projects, which is due to report at the end of the year. Charles Strang noted that the urban dimension has gone; and there is a major issue as to how it relates to the planning system; it would be good of the Planning TF could engage on that

aspect. Vicki Swales reported that it had been pushed at a meeting in June, and it remains essentially rural. Chrissie Valuri was interested in being involved as it related to her PhD thesis. **It was agreed that Vicki will invite member bodies and convenors (including Helen Todd for Land) to a meeting with a wider plea for engagement.**

**Wildlife Crime:** 10 member bodies are interested, and it was agreed to focus for the first year on the core of wildlife crime and poor enforcement of the law by the police, by commissioning an authoritative document (part funded by LINK DPF), beginning in October for use in early 2014. Several MSPs are interested in the issue.

**Wildlife Forum:** We have a new Scottish Biodiversity strategy. WF published a benchmark document of the outcomes it wants to see on the same day. The media generated some heat about peat issues which the WF clarified. The Scotch Whisky Association and WF are meeting to discuss joint issue around peat, and a subgroup is working on peat extraction and horticulture, that is not under consideration by the IUCN Peatland Programme. WF is considering how it will engage with the new SBS; government has brought out a paper on groups which the WF needs to respond. WF to consider where the Species Champions initiative goes next, it has been a massive success, though will need support. Members were reminded that not all the SC MSPs have heard from the relevant member yet. The meeting discussed the offer of a workshop for members proposed by Clifton Bain (IUCN Peatland Programme) to discuss where there are gaps in positions/statements that could be usefully filled.

Woodland: Has met Bob Macintosh to discuss the future of the Forestry Commission and to mark that it is an area of NGO interest. Angus Yarwood's paper on the subject was circulated in January to members and is being worked on by Mike Wood (RSPB) for the TF & Governance Group. On timescales, it would be useful if the LINK paper came out before Government's; they are not being clear on their processes. **Andy to speak to Mike on AY's paper. It will go to members for input before it is published.**

#### **Other emerging issues**

**Media Training:** There was interest in media training among those members present. Staff would develop proposals. Other issues were covered in previous discussion.

### **3. Member updates**

**Archaeology Scotland:** September is Scottish Archaeology Month. The website has been refreshed, will be live soon. The merger between Historic Scotland and the RCAHMS is happening with the policy unit moving into government.

**RSPB:** new strategy – giving nature a home – helping wildlife and nature, mainly income and membership related, though potentially much wider. It is getting positive feedback from the public. Following up the State of Nature report with discussion between partners about putting pressure on governments. Jim Densham would be covering agriculture while Amy Corrigan is on maternity leave, and overseeing climate work.

**JMT:** Though gains made on core wild land areas in the SPP there will be fights over windfarm developments. Taking legal action against Highland Council for inconsistent decisions in the middle of a core wild land area, which will be critical. An individual is taking action against the Borders Council on another issue. Seeking Protected Expenses Orders for

these and a fighting fund. John Lowe will join as Fraser Wallace's replacement in October when he retires as head of Perth Grammar School.

**APRS:** covered above, relates mainly to Unfinished Business.

**SCNP:** Camas Mor – considering whether to appeal to the Supreme Court and potentially Europe (*is doing so*).

There could be an action for LINK to highlight how many cases go to court because of lack of due process. Andy commented that this is partly covered by the Legal Governance group which has spread knowledge of issues in the network. The courts have been slow to take cases. There is growing understanding with the Taylor and Gill reviews. We need a legal strategy to test areas of law, ie what sustainable development means. Beryl noted there are problems with the Reporters system with variability and inconsistency. Public Local Inquiries are also an issue.

**MCS:** MCS with ClientEarth and an environmental lawyer corresponded about EU@ areas of conservation in England which had not been managed legally, as protection after damage was in their view illegal - which was successful. Now doing a risk based approach of SCS in England on fisheries activities. For Scotland, Kara Brydson and Calum are following this with ScotGov to see what they are doing, concluding that they have been 'leading a charmed life' on fisheries. Biodiversity Duty and whatever happened to it – first report has to be completed in 2014.

Beachwatch big weekend on 21/22 September.

4 staff in Scotland. Anne Saunders is moving on to work on the Falklands with the JNCC. Will be looking at that role. Anne is pulling together MTF response to the litter strategy and represents LINK on the Zero Waste Scotland Board. (the meeting suggested trying NTF to replace her).

**SWLG:** biggest activity event has been the publication Windfarms gone Wild, to which Helen McDade and John Mayhew contributed articles. It has been very well received here and abroad, with more print runs, donations received and membership growing, though it did not get picked up by the media. It has been sent to MSPs, MPs and Councillors.

**Buglife:** In Scotland liaising with Rob Gibson on neocotinids over evidence to RACCE from Owen Patterson. Has been reviewing its representation on Links across the UK and getting others involved in various TFs here. A new website coming soon.

**Plantlife:** launched a new Farmland report. Working on important plant areas approach, promoting it and how it can contribute to landscape scale restoration.

#### 4. AOB

**Revamp of LINK's website:** Convenors were urged to respond to Rea's email seeking feedback.

Next meeting is Congress , AGM and Strategic Planning 28/29 November.

AW/22/8/13