**Meeting[[1]](#footnote-1) Notes- Wildlife Subgroup meeting 27th March 2019, Augustine United Church, Edinburgh**

**Present-** Allan Bantick, Alistair Whyte, Arina Nagy-Vizitiu, Bruce Wilson, Calum Langdale, Daphne Vlastari, Dilraj Watson, Gus Jones, James Nairne, Liz Ferrell, Maggie Keegan, Roger Downie, Rachel Tierney (SWT), Paul Walton, Jill Dowse (SWT)

**Apologies-** Alaistair Whyte, Catherine Gemmell, Craig Macadam, Eddie Palmer, Helen Senn, Paul Kirkland, Stuart Brooks

**Actions from the 11th December 2018 meeting**

* Craig Macadam, Arina Nagy-Vizitiu, Bruce Wilson and Paul Walton have volunteered to be part of an advocacy working group to steer the work on NEN and PA. Dilraj and Daphne to develop a workplan to guide the activities for the working group. Carry Forward (Detailed action plan discussion in the next meeting following 27th March meeting).
* Craig Macadam and Bruce Wilson to feedback on the output from the RSPB NEN workshop post mid-January. Carry Forward
* Dilraj to ask Esther/Calum from MCS regarding Marine Conservation Programme Board and LINK membership- Completed (LINK has no members of the Marine Conservation Board).
* Craig to update on SBS Group- Completed (Update provided by Paul Walton)
* In January Calum will reach out to each MSP champion whose species is mentioned in climate change/biodiversity report. Completed
* Calum to speak to some of the members by mid-January to flesh out ideas how the young people engagement can be taken forward with the species champion initiative by tapping into the existing engagement with members. Completed
* James Nairne to contact Claire Baker through a meeting request and if that is declined we reach out to John Finnie (Species champion for Aspen), where RBGE, SWBG and SWT to meet with him to discuss becoming species champion. Completed

1. **Information session on the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF) Review**

Rachel Tierney gave a presentation on the SBIF Review. The presentation outlined the need of the SBIF review document[[2]](#footnote-2), which arose from gap in the collection, collation and sharing of biological data across Scotland, and how biodiversity data can be made sustainable, and the data is used as a shared evidence base. The framework for the review employed a systems approach and has 5 Outcomes (transformed data flows, transformed service provision, transformed governance and culture, transformed funding, transition by 2025). The key points highlighted and discussions around them at meeting

* **Outcome 1: Transformed Data Flows-** The review recommends that the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) and the NBN Atlas remain as the primary platforms for submission and sharing of data, and it is recommended within the review that unified data management services should be in place by 2025. The presence of one data management portal would streamline how and where data is submitted.
* **Outcome 4: Transformed Funding-** The review recommends public funding should be provided to cover the core costs of the NBN Trust and its Network of National and Regional Hubs.
* **What’s next with SBIF?** Proposals have been sent to Scottish Government, and Hugh Dignon has asked for the proposals to be defined within three key points. From SBIF point of view these will be asks, associated risks and wider benefits. SBIF have had a meeting with the ECCLR Convenor Gillian Martin and have also written to Finlay Carson (Con.) to table a motion, Maurice Golden (Con) has expressed an interest to do an event. Rachel Tierney will be working on promoting the tool to the Scottish Government through highlighting how this tool will help contribute to Scottish Government Strategic objectives and National Outcomes for Scotland[[3]](#footnote-3). SBIF have had a discussion on whether they want the tool within the programme for government or should the programme for government be built on this tool.
* **Opportunities to enhance the use, and promotion of SBIF as a tool**: Noted below are additional recommendations made by the Wildlife Subgroup members-
* If the biodiversity outcomes arising from the SBIF tool can underpin the National Performance Framework?
* Whether the tool can accommodate an evidenced based species prioritisation exercise? There was a discussion on the challenges around data recording, challenges of verifying data, validity of historical data and what is done in the absence of an index for data were discussed. For example: It was mentioned that currently organisations are going directly to organisations that have the data themselves, such as RSPB getting robust lichens data from James Hutton Institute.
* Can the SBIF tool be used as an early warning mechanism in terms of preventive action? There is still a need for an early warning system, which needs to be supported by trends, which the SBIF tool will provide.
* Can the SBIF tool help in the delivery of biodiversity policy areas based on outcomes?
* Integrating the biodiversity thinking around the wider land use sector, can we deliver the National Ecological Network (NEN) with the help of the, opportunity mapping within the NEN through SBIF tools (example of Beeline), and can the tool demonstrate that it can facilitate that mapping?
* How can the SBIF tool contribute to the environmental strategy? There are implications on the costs of the tool specially in the wider context that reduction in Scottish Government finances are reducing SNH budget. The potential challenges which might arise due to seeking funding for monitoring (in line with SBIF recommendations) and funding for conservation (linked to our Biodiversity Route Map 2.0 ask); need to be managed. Subgroup members indicated that it should be made explicit in communications with the Scottish Government the funding outlay for the NBN should not be at the cost of biodiversity funding, particularly when they are concerns about reduction in SNH grants.
* Jill Dowse indicated that some of the above recommendations can be explored through grass roots pilots in some regions, in a tiered or phased approach.

**Action Point:** Daphne to touch base with Rachel to consider how we can help promote the outcomes of the review and integrate our asks. This could be done by developing short policy papers with the SBIF team.

1. **Updates and actions**

* Woodland Trust meeting with new Lib Dem spokespeople: Arina Nagy-Vizitiu met the new Lib Dem spokespeople, Rebecca Bell for environment and Jenny Marr for rural affairs. They are not MSPs and they both work for Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP. Rebecca Bell also works part time for Willie Rennie MSP.
* Meeting with Scottish Government: Paul Walton, Lloyd Austin and Daphne met Scottish Government officials in January to discuss Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs). The SSI on Birds and Habitats has already been passed and LINK is working with Scottish Government on a guidance document. A further SSI is expected on invasive alien species.
* Beavers: Advocacy on legal protections for beavers was considered successful, with the Scottish Government announcing the legislation giving European Protected species status to Eurasian beavers will come into effect in May. Also, John Finnie MSP is now the species champion for Scottish beavers as well as aspen.
* Meeting with Pat Monaghan: Paul Walton and LINK staff Alice Walsh met new Honorary Fellow Pat Monaghan (Regius Professor of Zoology at Glasgow University) for an introductory meeting. Discussion was around relationships with the Scottish Government and SNH on biodiversity issues, as well as how LINK works and current priorities.
* Stakeholder meeting on environmental governance and principles: A series of meetings on environmental governance and principles was held in February, where views were taken from stakeholders on the environmental principles and governance consultation.
* State of Nature (SoN) report 2019: As indicated in the December’s meetings notes LINK members have had a series of meetings with SNH in terms of working with SNH on post-2020 biodiversity policy. LINK produced a short paper[[4]](#footnote-4) to inform the discussions in the November 2018 meeting. The paper discussed points of specific areas of contention regarding SNH concerns at previous State of Nature reports and Francesca Osowska (CEO, SNH) agreed with the paper. Because of this SNH are now involved in the development of the 2019 SoN report, with David O’Brien (Evidence & Reporting Manger) involved from SNH. The Scottish report is being produced by RSPB, funding needs to be applied for it. Due on the 12th of September the report structure will be framed around pressures, pollution and persecution. Paul Walton will be sharing an outline of the report. There were discussions around applying for a DPF (£5,500), and regarding concerns that the DPF is currently under pressure, and it was recommended that external funding sources, which can be applied to with the support of LINK fundraising staff). It was also suggested that contributions from sponsors/ other partner organisations could also be considered. One of the funding options discussed was the Glasgow Nationalist Society, which can fund up to a £1000
* Future meetings with SNH: The SNH/SG meeting on the National Ecological Network (NEN), was due in Jan. That meeting is yet to take place, therefore no updates from SNH. Charles Dundas is now seeking another meeting with SNH to take forward the post-2020 biodiversity policy agenda.
* Red Alert Report update: Scotland’s Nature on Red Alert report was launched on the 3rd of January, and the report received coverage on print, social media and radio. The report has also been used to highlight the impact of climate change on biodiversity with some Species Champion MSPs. Some of the MSPs LINK staff have engaged with are Finlay Carson MSP (Leisler’s Bat) (Con), Michelle Ballantyne MSP (Atlantic salmon) (Con), Alexander Burnett MSP (freshwater pearl mussel) (Con), Gordon Lindhurst MSP (kittiwake) (CON), Claudia Beamish (Forester moth) (Lab). Recently the report also featured in Alison Johnstone’s (Green) opening speech[[5]](#footnote-5) in the Parliament on the climate emergency.
* NEN prospectus update: Work on the prospectus is being currently done by Zoe Clelland (RSPB). Zoe is aiming to have a final draft ready for the 25th of April SNH Landscape-scale Conservation Group meeting. There was a discussion around exploring the idea whether the NEN prospectus content matches our advocacy on the FFSN campaign and environment strategy.

**Action Point:** Craig Macadam and Paul Walton to touch base with Zoe in early May regarding next steps for the prospectus.

1. **Climate Change**

* Climate Bill: Dilraj is pulling together specific member reps to lead and support the development of LINK’s Stage 2 advocacy and to develop amendments. Bruce Wilson, Craig Macadam, Nourish (Soil Association Scotland tbc) and the Marine Group will need to be involved. This is being done in coordination with SCCS.
* Climate Change Adaptation): The Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024[[6]](#footnote-6) consultation is currently out, with a 9th April deadline. Woodland, Trust, RSPB and possibly SWT would be responding to the consultations. A LINK response can be developed on the basis of those.

**Action Point:** Dilraj to draw from members CCA submissions, develop and submit a LINK consultation response. Done

1. **National Ecological Network Parliamentary Event**

The NEN roundtable parliamentary event is taking place on the 25th of June and this event will be used as platform to inform the MSPs on what the NEN means. In that context as the joint LINK/SNH NEN document[[7]](#footnote-7), cannot be used due to Scottish Government concerns, it was questioned whether the NEN roadmap document[[8]](#footnote-8) was still fit for purpose, can LINK rework and issue a more recent paper? In terms of the format and discussions within the event it was agreed that

* 2-3 members of the subgroup would have case studies to reflect on how the NEN would look like for example the Beeline project. LINK speakers for the event would be RSPB, Buglife and SWT
* Recommendations for SNH speakers at the event were Debbie Bassett, Francesca Osowska, Paul Sizeland (working on post 2020 framework). Paul Sizeland has overseen the EULife funded project on ecological coherence, and it would be useful to ask SNH about the project, as would be foot in the door to develop common vision around the NEN.

1. **Protected Areas**

* The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) PAs Group will be announcing the new monitoring strategy, there are however concerns that no monitoring will be done until the new system is in place.
* SNH is developing the new approach to PA, and it seems the new approach is less about nature conservation, there are also concerns on how Natura sites will move forward.
* Work is currently being done on the PA vision, if we are to meet that vision, with the 2020 strategy on the horizon there are questions around what actions can be taken and whether the data is comparable?
* In response to this RSPB is drafting a letter, which covers concerns around the monitoring, the Wildlife subgroup will be requested sign up.

**Action Point:** Paul Walton to circulate letter to wildlife subgroup for sign-up.

* Craig Macadam and Isobel Mercer have recently met with SNH the lead on Protected Areas (PAs), Andy Dorin. Andy is keen to change the perception of PAs from burden into stewardship and is also interested in tackling issues of under investment and managing for change. He supports the NEN and is keen to work with LINK on promoting it and its advantages. Craig Macadam recommended via email that Andy Dorin should be invited to the NEN parliamentary event.

1. **Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Governance**

* LINK received an invitation to join [the SBS Coordination Group.](https://www.nature.scot/scotlands-biodiversity/scottish-biodiversity-strategy/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-working-groups) Paul Walton has been nominated with Craig Macadam to be the back-up. The subgroup approved this decision.
* The membership of Environment and Economy Leaders Group (EELS) group which is on top of the hierarchy of the governance structure of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy does not include any ENGO reps. This contrasts with the previous structure where ENGOs were represented. There was a discussion that LINK should also request a seat on the EELS group, which we have done so in the past but have been told, that there is a lot of wider issues that are discussed within the group. LINK is looking to still pursue this.
* There is now a need for an updated route map, which should be an improved iteration with a more agreed, stronger and structured process.
* Deborah Long had an introductory meeting with Bridget Campbell (Director, Environment and Forestry). Currently a LINK meeting is being pursued and Paul Walton will be emailing, Deborah regarding this meeting.

1. **Species Champion**

* Calum notified the meeting about John Finnie becoming beaver champion and that next steps are for ‘host’ organisations to get together to discuss next steps, this is beneficial as there are 4 organisations involved so coordination avoids any confusion or repetition.

**Action Point:** Calum and beaver ‘host’ organisations (SWBG, SWT, RZSS, WT) to discuss next steps and engagement plans.

* Paul Wheelhouse will be offered sandeel with organisations RSPB and MCS.
* SRSG are planning to ask two MSPs (outline msps) to champion Peregrine and Goshawk. SRSG will be invited to next wildlife subgroup meeting to discuss their plans for champions. Query was raised whether RSPB should get involved, Paul Walton explained they have a close relationship with SRSG and Calum indicated that RSPB have already been notified.

**Action Point:** Calum to follow-up with SRSG and invite to next WSG meeting.

* The next Species Champions Newsletter date was indicated as 25th April, with a submission deadline of 15th April.
* Request for a stall in the garden lobby has been submitted and will be hosted by Finlay Carson MSP, the earliest date is mid-2020 which is also the biodiversity strategy deadline year, it is therefore worth putting it in for forward planning.
* Species champion Coordinator for Westminster got in touch with Calum to see what has exchange notes and generate ideas. The four UK Species Champions initiative Coordinators are now planning to set up a call to discuss each initiative, strengths/weaknesses etc.
* Subgroup members with Species Champions were urged to Let Calum know of any past or planned engagement events. One of the key priorities for Species Champions is integration into other LINK work areas and knowing what events are planned is key to ensuring this can happen. Calum was asked to share googledoc again with group.

**Action Point:** Calum to send round googledoc link to members and review easiest way of submitting Species Champions info.

* Shona Robinson MSP is keen to become a Species Champion and is interested in urban and marine species. Calum has enquired of her if she has had any communication with any LINK members in the past. Calum asked for inspiration for potential Species, Bruce Wilson recommended SWT Miley Reserve for inspiration. Bruce however indicated that currently SWT capacity for hosting may be an issue.
* Members use species champion in different ways, and if there was any scope for Calum to discuss with members individually on what they might have in mind with regards to what they want to/can do. He suggested a series of one-to-one meetings with each organisation to determine aspirations for initiative going forward, likely capacity and what role Species Champions Coordinator can have to help. Attending members agreed this would be useful. Gus Jones queried, where on the LINK website information on Species Champions MSPs social media handles available?

**Action Point:** Calum to reach out to members with champions to discuss the initiative in the context of their champions.

**Action Point:** Calum to share the list of twitter accounts of species champion with members with the meeting notes.

* Members opinions on summer engagement plans was sought. Calum outlined that any focus on MSP engagements over summer can be integrated with FFSN campaign, including a ‘pledge’, followed by an FFSN Autumn event. Group Species Champion engagements worked well last year, positive feedback from MSPs, helping smaller organisations with capacity issues and allowing larger ones access to other MSPs, encouraged cross party action. Calum outlined plans for around 5 group engagement activities over summer with a range of themes (for example habitat area/link priority theme/msp region. WSG members agreed this is a positive action and agreed more group events would be good this summer.

**Action Point:** Calum will gauge capacity for summer engagement activities and produce guidance how to integrate engagement activities with FFSN campaign

* Gillian Martin has emailed Calum directly to ask whether she can be Grey seal species champion. Calum is unsure of context but thinks it is most probably due to local action group letter to ECCLR on disturbances at Forvie. WSG agrees it would be a good idea to pursue this due to Gillian ECCLR convener, despite it being not strictly to protocol. Woodland Trust (existing ‘host’ organisation) also happy for her to do this.

**Action Point:** Calum will reply to Gillian for more info, to discuss next steps and match a LINK member organisation to be ‘host’.

* Staff member at Education Scotland (ES) has emailed Calum asking if Executive Agencies of Government can be Species Champions within the initiative in the context of biodiversity duty reporting. Agreement it wouldn’t fit in with initiative, but also that it could be worth pursuing as part of LINK work on biodiversity duty. Daphne suggested arranging a meeting to determine what ES want and how LINK/members can help.

**Action Point:** Calum to follow up.

1. **Action Plan**

* Due to paucity of time members were unable to have an in-depth discussion. In the next Wildlife Subgroup meeting action plan discussion should be the first agenda item after the updates.
* In terms of the subgroup’s forward plans and focus for advocacy action, the following themes emerged:

1. Concerns about management and protection of PAs
2. Funding and action for biodiversity
3. National Ecological Network

* With respect to funding, Stuart Brooks has indicated he might be able to investigate the impact SNH’s funding has had on biodiversity for this organisation. This was not taken further forward due to lack of time, but members discussed that funding seems to be a recurring issue.
* LINK should do a study on impact of funding on biodiversity. There was also discussion on how this is framed. One suggestion was to use the NEN & PA frame: to conserve the environment, we need PAs and NEN, and to be able to deliver on this we need funding. Members agreed that a LINK paper should be produced to evaluate biodiversity funding in Scotland. The LINK paper should distil the evidence. The subgroup noted previous work that had been done on the status of funding for conservation:
* Where the green grants went Scotland report[[9]](#footnote-9).
* Assessment of the EU Life funding.
* Pressures on PAs reports (Sheila George)
* Members further discussed whether an external consultant should be hired to write this. One suggestion was to get SEF to oversee the work.
* Additional ideas were explored:
* Do we have all the evidence we need to progress our asks on the key points identified above (a, b, and c)? If so, do we have the right comms materials to relay out points?
* Our asks should also be framed within the context of emerging evidence within the SoN report.
* Should we develop a vision for biodiversity post-2020?
* How can we use the joint SNH- LINK position paper on NEN?
* We must reach out to other partners such as James Hutton Institute to collaborate?
* A route map will be a series of projects which will help to establish the NEN (projects under the NEN)- problem solution, indicative (top five challenges).
* Could there be a LINK parliamentary biodiversity strategy event in 2019 a year before the CBD 2020.

1. **AOB**

* Daphne has been given the task of reviewing chapter 15 on the SDG VNR, this came through the SDG network.
* Elizabeth Ferrell is stepping down as the Deputy of the Wildlife Subgroup to take on the role of Vice-convener Wildlife Crime Subgroup. Craig Macadam in absentia proposed Paul Walton as the Deputy of the Wildlife Subgroup, which was seconded by Elizabeth Ferrell and accepted by the members present.
* The National Islands Plan (which includes biosecurity) is due in July (public consultation currently ongoing). RSPB are working on it and the plan will be done by August if anyone would like to know more please connect with Paul Walton.

**Date and location for the next meeting TBC.**

1. Agenda for the 27th March meeting is available [here](http://www.scotlink.org/private-docs/agenda-wildlife-subgroup-meeting-27th-march-2019/). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. SBIF Review Final Report: “A Review of the Biological Recording Structure in Scotland” <https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/SBIF-Review-Final-Report-and-Recommendations.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For detailed information on how SBIF will contribute to different policy drivers that are underpinned by biodiversity data, please refer to pg. 42 of the SBIF document. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Evidence base paper for SNH LINK meeting in November 2018- <http://www.scotlink.org/private-docs/evidence-base-paper-for-snh-link-meeting-november-2018/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12025&mode=html#iob_108805> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Climate Change Adaptation Consultation 2019-2024: <https://consult.gov.scot/energy-and-climate-change-directorate/adaptation-programme-2019-2024/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Joint LINK/SNH NEN statement (2017): <http://www.scotlink.org/private-docs/scotlands-national-ecological-network-nen-snh-statement/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A Roadmap for Adopting a National Ecological Network for Scotland (2017): <http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/SEL_A-Roadmap-for-Adopting-a-National-Ecological-Network-in-Scotland.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Where the Green Grants Went SCOTLAND: An Analysis of Grants from UK Sources for Environmental Work in Scotland <https://www.greenfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/WTGGW-Scotland-digital.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)