

**LINK Governance Group meeting
Wednesday 11 January 2017
LINK Advocacy office, Edinburgh**

Meeting Note

Attending: Lloyd Austin (Chair), Jen Anderson, Daphne Vlastari, Charles Dundas, Rea Cris, Lisa Webb, Joyce McMillan, Bruce Wilson, Sarah Dolman, Tessa Jones

Apologies: Roger Downie, Robin Parker, Beryl Leatherland

1. Meeting with Clive Mitchell

LWA, JA, DV, BW and LW met with Clive in advance of the main meeting. Clive was made aware of the key issues that LINK Governance Group has been working on in 2016 (discussion centred around Brexit and legal strategy) and LINK's plans for governance work in the coming year.

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have liaison meetings with Clive more regularly than annually and that we would arrange to meet Clive again in summer.

ACTION: Daphne to send Clive the report from the Scottish Universities Lawyers Network on Europe (SULNE)

2. Brexit

There was a roundtable update from member organisations on their work on Brexit. Points to note: Marine Group have an upcoming meeting with Marine Scotland about Brexit. LINK will develop a response to 'Scotland's Place in Europe' and seek a further meeting with Mike Russell to discuss this in due course. Daphne and Paul Walton are both on the LINK Refit Group.

ACTION: Daphne to find out Defra contact leading on Brexit issues

ACTION: Daphne to follow up on Mike Russell meeting

Greener UK

There was a discussion on [Greener UK](#) (the London-based coalition of >10 eNGOs campaigning for positive environmental benefits with Brexit). Important that consideration given to reserved vs devolved status when developing policy lines. This was discussed at Greener UK Board and the result is that Lloyd and Stephen Hinchley of RSPB will write a paper on post-Brexit devolution arrangements to include fisheries, agriculture, protected areas etc and to examine potential outcomes under different models. The paper will also consider NGO comms. It will be circulated to the LINK Brexit Subgroup for comment.

ACTION: Lloyd to circulate Greener UK draft paper to Brexit subgroup once written

It was noted that the joint LINKs wrote to the Chair of Green Alliance/ Greener UK to remind them we're seeking similar outcomes and to ensure we maintain a dialogue.

There followed a discussion about advocacy targets and as well as usual suspects including Ministers, it was noted that the three main Westminster Committees are the Environmental Audit Committee, Evt, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the Exiting the EU Committee.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial if LINK organised a civil society roundtable within the next two years to highlight and discuss the issues associated with what Brexit means for the environment. Discussion followed about the appropriate timing/ place for this eg attached to the EEB2017 conference; or hold something in 2018 and potentially attach it to a British Irish Council meeting.

ACTION: Daphne, Joyce, Jen to further discuss this idea of civil society Brexit roundtable

Ombudsman proposal

We discussed the idea that had arisen from Congress about the means to ensure envtl regulations are adhered to when we are not part of EU and thus no backstop of the European Court of Justice. One solution could be to have a Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (or 'maintaining environmental standards in a post-Brexit situation'), and we discussed that we could seek to get such a commitment in the Great Repeal Bill. We should present the idea of a Commissioner to Mike Russell in future discussions.

It was highlighted that there is a useful table supplied by Northern Ireland Env't Link in the [EAC report](#) which summarises legislation and relevance to EFTA/ EEA (see table 1).

ACTION: Daphne to coordinate LINK response to Mike Russell, noting publication of SPIE and relevant point, suggesting benefits of an Env't Commissioner and seeking meeting to discuss.

We also noted the recent secondments eg Jonny Hall of NFUS being seconded into Government. Discussed whether LINK could suggest to Bridget Campbell that they may want to consider environmental expertise to be seconded into ScotGov. Lloyd noted that he had already made suggestion of secondment to David Barnes (ScotGov Agriculture).

ACTION: Lloyd to chase a response to his offer to DB

3. Spring conferences

Dates announced so far include Labour (24-26 Feb, Perth), LibDems (10-11 March, Perth) and Conservatives (3-4 March, Glasgow). RSPB will have stands at Labour and LibDems, but cost to have a stand at Conservatives is prohibitive. LINK (Daphne) will attend all conferences as an observer.

4. Legal Strategy

The legal strategy workshop took place on 14 December and was a success. Mary Church is writing up the discussions from that workshop. There was broad support at the workshop for an environmental law centre. A likely model would be the model currently used by the Legal Services Agency for women's rights issues. There is current discussion about how to fund to take this forward and hope for a one-year project officer post which would scope the idea further, explore models and potential for funding.

The next meeting of the Legal Strategy subgroup will take place on 20 January and will discuss next steps for this area of work.

ACTION: Lloyd to check if Paul Brown of LSA is attending mtg on 20 Jan

SCVO had suggested that an environmental law centre could be fit within the Open Government Pioneers Initiative.

ACTION: Charles to look further at the OGPI and investigate, along with Jen and Daphne, and report back to group.

The environmental justice consultation closed in June last year and there has been little action since then. A PQ was asked and Annabelle Ewing replied, in October 2016, that the consultation analysis would be published 'shortly'. RSPB following up with another PQ and Mary had written to Annabelle Ewing seeing a meeting.

ACTION: Daphne/ Rea to check if envtl justice featured in last SNP manifesto

ACTION: Lloyd to discuss further with Mary, including follow-up for Annabelle mtg request

5. Commission on Parliamentary Reform

The group discussed how best we input to this and noted that much of what we would want to say is captured in the Governance Matters document. We thought we could revisit what had been started with Andy Myles last year re LINK review on how well the Scottish Parliament is functioning.

ACTION: Jen to pull together the info that was started with Andy and share with Charles D, Lloyd, Joyce, Robin (and any other interested?) Decide how to proceed next and whether we want to ask Andy for involvement.

ACTION: Jen to set up a mtg with Commissioners for soon after our internal meeting.

6. Local governance

The group discussed what we might do for the local government elections in May. Agreed that we could use a FoS piece to highlight some key local governance issues

ACTION: Daphne to email reps to ask for any suggestions for such issues

There could also be a way to use LINK Local to make contact with local groups, ask if any are considering arranging hustings events and then providing them with some information if they need it.

ACTION: Daphne/ Karen to discuss using LINK Local for this

It was also suggested that we could do a one-off hustings style LINK event.

ACTION: Jen, Daphne, Rea and Joyce to discuss thus further by teleconf.

7. Lobbying Register

Daphne will attend a SCVO roundtable with Billy McLaren, Scotland's lobbying registrar, on 1st February. Members should update Daphne in advance of that meeting with any points to raise or questions in advance of that meeting.

ACTION: Daphne to check if Rea can attend too

ACTION: ALL to contact Daphne with any point before 1 February

8. AOB

It was noted that Joyce had attended two events on just transition and that there is deep concern about where investment for low carbon is going to come from. Discussed Green Investment Bank sell-off and noted that James Curran is one of the five trustees involved in the special share process.

9. DONM

Agreed to have next GG meetings in April and July, and to have Brexit subgroup telecalls in the months where there is no GG planned. To include Clive Mitchell of SNH in the July meeting.

ACTION: Lisa to doodle for these meetings