**Note of a meeting of the LINK Planning Group held in Edinburgh on 11 May 2018.**

**Attending**: Aedán Smith Convenor (RSPB) Clare Symons Vice-Convenor (PD), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Arina (WTS) Diarmid Hearns (NTS) John Mayhew (APRS), Daphne Vlastari LINK, Alice Walsh, LINK.

**Apologies:** Charles Strang, Sue Hamilton, Beryl Leatherland, Gus Jones.

**1. Planning Bill update:** So far we have met with MSPs on the Local Government & Communities Committee, and beyond; party researchers; the SPAD Calum Kerr, about the Bill. There is some consensus on the purpose of the bill and the issues around Simplified Development Zones. Work still to be done on ERA and Main Issues Report. We continue engagement. Soon to meet Monica Lennon (16/5), which Clare should attend. Then we will meet Conservatives about ERA and Environmental Courts. Meetings with Labour and SNP researchers are also ahead. We have submitted evidence to 2 committees. The Stage 1 report will be published on 17 May. **We discussed publishing a PR in reaction to it, and possibly a supplementary briefing. Bill team discussion scheduled for 10 am on 17 May.** Aedán will check out with RSPB media team if media interest is possible, and would appear for GMS if so, though the Stage 1 debate is likely to be of more interest to media.

PD is planning a demo outside Parliament to coincide with the Stage 1 debate. This meeting considered the timing, not critical to have it during the debate good, and its likely to do more to generate media interest in the issue with good visual stunt, rather than engage MSPs – 23 May looked good. LINK will help out with media contacts and social media, possibly a PR. Possibility to alert e-petition signers to it too; we are covered under data protection rules. **Daphne and Clare to discuss.**

We have planned to do some media work around e action results, around Stage 1, issuing a RR with our regrets/thanks around the debate. There is **another round of effort to get sign up via Group members, by 25 May**.

Our briefing has gone to all MSPs on the Committee, to researchers, and Spad. Amendments have been split, pitched to different MSPs. Some will be followed up to ensure they will be progressing. C Beamish, G Simpson, J Gilruth, A Wightman and M Lennon are all engaged, some asking for policy positions rather than actual amendments. There are points to clarify – the meeting with M Lennon is important for this. Biodiversity, Supplementary Guidance. Labour are still undecided on ERA, their support will be essential. Daphne will send the amendments around this group.

Timing: Government wants Stage 2 to be finished in June and Stage 3 in September. The volume of other legislation coming through is a factor in getting more time for this bill. Our Bill team has discussed the merits of trying to prolong the timetable. Clare reported on a new self-formed group who have been affected by decisions that have been overturned, which contacted PD for advice. They are considering putting in a petition to the Petitions Committee. Clare thought this would not work, but is a possible tactic for slowing it down. **John noted that Rob Edwards is interested in more such cases, which Clare could provide.** We will keep saying the bill is terrible, and needs more time to be put right. Clare sending out PD open letter to lots of groups, can get about 40/50 community councils to sign up to it, and sought support from others. John Molyneux of ZWS, became a councillor and encouraged Glasgow council to support ERA. **Daphne will help Clare on whom to alert in advance and contacts to send it to.**

Our plans include having a stand in the Garden Lobby in September to showcase examples of what we are talking about, eg case studies, visuals, involving young people/disadvantaged groups to counter the accusation that middle class nimbys are the ones calling for ERA. Daphne will approach G Simson.

On ERA more generally: We want to introduce a limited right of appeal under special circumstances to people who have already made representations (as we did in 2006) This would come into play if the development was contrary to the Local Development Plan, if it requires an EIA, if it’s a decision that is made by the council on its own land (conflict of interest), and if there is an unresolved statutory objection. The key thing is that the appealer has to have already been involved in the process. Can be a community of interest or place. A key test is whether it is in the wider public interest, rather than an individual’s interest. Detail of it could be dealt with in secondary legislation.

There is the option of restricting the applicant’s right of appeal, on the basis that it is contrary to the Local Development Plan. We need to clarify with Andy Wightman if he is going ahead with that. need to clarify with him.

A fee for applicants to appeal, which may also apply to communities though not restrictively. We have pitched this to the Spad, and think they are doing this anyway, for developers.

Clare written some briefing for people to reply to questions on how ERA would work from a lawyer. She will **circulate to the Group** so all are aware.

**All: Please note Daphne’s email of 11 May following this meeting.**

**Land Use Strategy**: There is some progress from the recent LINK meeting with Bridget Campbell which Daphne will be following up, on the potential to link it to planning. Spad also important. SG have put Katriona Carmichael in charge of it and she is keen to talk to us (Sheila George for that Subgroup). They may be interested in our amendment wholly or partially to create Strategic Land Use Regional Partnerships (SLURPs!), retaining the strategic regional planning partnerships and linking them to the LUS.

Diarmid reported that there is interest within the Land Reform part of Scottish Government too, and a **meeting will be sought**. There is still disconnect between the LR and Planning agendas. The Land Commission did not include the LUS in its submission on planning, silo thinking.

**National Ecological Network**: Decision for this group is whether we want to take it forward as a national development? There have been discussions within RSPB on the mitigation hierarchy. This is in our briefing. It has not been allocated to an MSP yet. C Beamish and A Johnstone are keen on it. Ideally would like it to be accepted. Internal action to **reconvene LINK members on 24 May to consider the material consideration point, and link with Marine.** We need to make sure it has some teeth. **Bruce will find out who in SG is blocking it, and Aedan will meet them to discuss.**

**2. Group work ahead – beyond the Planning Bill**.
Suggested seminar about what kind of a planning system do we want in Scotland. This stems for earlier discussions within the Group. Clare has been reading about the influence of neoliberal ideology on the planning system. A lot of what we are doing is challenging neoliberalism. It could be useful to look beyond the planning system at the bigger picture, to understand better what we are campaigning about. Ewan Haig son of Cliff Haig has written a good book about Chicago. This fits in to some extent with the work of the Economics group. Could be wider than just our sector. It is closely connected to what we have been talking about the disconnect between the planning system, the NPF, and the budget. What we are not doing in terms of the SDGs. It was agreed that the Planning and Economics Groups should discuss – its wider than planning. W have to challenge current economic thinking, the hurdle we have to overcome. Also links to the ELUK conference in October, the ‘Beyond GDP’ alliance that LINK helped facilitate via the Flourishing Scotland project around the review of the National Performance Framework. The Carnegie Trust would be interested, as would those involved in the November 2016 Economics Conference and SCVO’s SDG network in which Daphne participates. Initially the aim is to develop a shared understanding and a shared language. People to potentially draw on are Hugh Ellis, Cliff and Ewan Haig. **Aedán and Clare to discuss further.**

**3. Integration needs ahead with other groups and subgroups**. Mainly covered already; Land use, Economics, cross over with Landscape, and integration of terrestrial and marine planning – we have an amendment in about it for the Bill. The [Sea Scotland conference](http://www.seascotland.scot/) on 20/21 June should be of interest to Planning Group members.

**4. AOB**
**Permitted Development Rights** are up for review later in the year. The **Hilltracks report** will be launched in September, useful to have it for that review.

There was a discussion about how you get involved in **secondary legislation**. Advice was to keep in close touch with officials if wishing to influence, and to be very well prepared as time frames are short.

The **National Planning Framework will be delayed till 2020** and will include merger with the SPP. It would have been due for review this year if not for the Bill. Discussion followed about the Government’s options, delays possible carry-overs and addition of new developments which would be stand-alone applications. SNH is talking of extension of the Central Scotland Green Network. Clare was dubious about its focus on development.

LINK was invited to speak to the Local Government and Communities Committee on **Access to Greenspace**, which Bruce would take forward, postponed until 23 May. The Committee asked for written submissions. Cttee meeting with a few invited speakers. Agreed to circulate information and invite feed-in from the Group, and to use the opportunity for advocacy round the Bill.

**An Camas Mor**? Gus was going to let members know about the timing of a possible demo at the Parliament. There is a commitment in the Plan that if it does not get built, a similar number will be built elsewhere.