**Notes & Actions, LINK Strategic Planning Meeting, 7 Dec 2017, Edinburgh**

PRESENT: Helen Todd (Chair & RS), John Mayhew (APRS), Vicki Swales (RSPB), Lorna Scott (NTS), Jim Densham (RSPB), Paul Walton (RSPB), Sarah Robinson (RZSS), Maggie Keagan (SWT), Helen Senn (RZSS), Eddie Palmer (SB), Davie Black (Plantlife), Mathew Crighton (FoES), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG), Lyndsay Croal (RSPB), Roger Powell (SCRA), Denis Mollison (HWDT), Charles Dundas (WTS). Louise Ramsay and James Nairne (SWBG), Calum Duncan (MCS), Clare Symonds (PD)

Staff: Jen Anderson, Phoebe Cochrane, Emilie Devenport, Calum Langdale, Daphne Vlastari, Alice Walsh

**1. LINK Voice and Impact**

Membership satisfaction: Trustees has been in dialogue with members over last 6 months on member satisfaction, which was positive overall. Dialogue would continue and the Board would consider suggestions raised in that dialogue, at its next meeting in January.

Structure: LINK went through a restructure a few years ago, to condense task forces so that there are now 5 key groups, most with various subgroups. Network meetings used to be quarterly to discuss opportunities for ‘cross pollination’ and were now twice per year – i.e. strategic planning (has been attached to Congress) and May Networking.

Planning Group was an example of a simple group with no subgroups, works well, mainly stand-alone though there has been cross over with the Marin Group on Marine Spatial Planning (National Marine Plan) and on National Environmental Network or NEN).

National Environment Network (NEN) was highlighted as an opportunity for cross-group collaboration – this was led by Wildlife Subgroup, has also been discussed at Planning, to be discussed at Marine and others.

Marine: Members continue to be interested and invested in the Marine project. Members have been live to several changes in capacity over the past year. LINK staff capacity will return to 1FTE from January; just finalising updated advocacy strategy to reflect future project goals and capacity. Its Aquaculture subgroup was live, with coordination between the two groups still being figured out. There has been some collaboration over LINK’s climate work and there was opportunity for more.

Economics: Challenges to source funding, currently no staff. There was a lot going on in this field at the moment including National Performance Framework review, National Investment Bank, Just Transition Coalition, so the LINK forum was important. In absence of dedicated staff member, group activity has focused on information sharing and co-ordination, rather than developing joint responses. A funding bid has been submitted which focuses on the circular economy.

Governance: Brexit had meant an unanticipated increase in workload, overseen by the Brexit Subgroup though in effect this was the bulk of the Governance Group’s focus, as well as involving several groups (Land, Marine and others). Daphne provided regular updates to the Brexit subgroup which could be shared more widely. Brexit involved contact with Scottish Parliament, Westminster, Environment Links UK (ELUK), Greener UK (GUK) and other UK colleagues and the thrust was to keep an eye on developments to ensure the best outcome for the environment. Greener UK was formed of several large organisations with UK wide representation though with some overlap in relation to ELUK Daphne and Lloyd (on behalf of Brexit subgroup) sat on GUK’s Devolution Subgroup to ensure reflection of what needs to happen in Scotland. An ELUK-GUK position statement had been developed on UK frameworks for a post Brexit era, which could replace the overview EU provided. A slight shift in Scottish Government (SG)’s position was being noted. Environmental Strategy Subgroup continued work towards and environmental law centre for Scotland.

Helen Todd noted the value of all the Groups and Subgroups in sharing and discussing, even where this did not drive particular actions. Charles Dundas observed that this represented action as much as did staffed action. Matthew Crighton supported this point and noted the model of the Economics Group, aiming to work on an area (circular economy) (as it had done over national performance framework) on which no members were working.

Land: This group was more challenging. With seven subgroups: woodlands, deer, wildlife and wildlife crime, food and farming, land use and land reform, landscape, species champions. The overarching Land Group did not drive policy: that still happened via subgroups, albeit that three priorities of land use and reform, wildlife and food & farming had been identified last year. Members were trying to link between subgroups. Deer subgroup was driving forward change without staff support, and Woodlands met as necessary, for example. Wildlife was large and well-attended though needed to input centrally, more. Practically, ways of working had not much changed though this did not feel problematic. One difference was that staff support could be allocated to the priorities. Noted that leaders of all subgroups should attend bi-annual Land group meetings (currently attended by only three priority subgroup leads) and that the Land Group model could be further developed. How to make Land Group more effective could be an agenda item on the next Land Meeting.

***ACTIONS: Subgroup leaders attending Land Group. Land Group consider effectiveness.***

Can LINK prioritise more for greater impact: LINK aimed to reduce the number of meetings to allow members more time to work on outputs. However, topics were very complex and required time to move forward. Groups were already driving forward change, and it was important to ensure the network could continue this. LINK was flexible enough to capitalise on opportunities as they arise and the meeting was not convinced that re-prioritising would be useful.

Other ongoing LINK activities: Board meetings, Congress (not in 2017 as LINK hosted EEB conference), parliamentary events, meetings with Ministers, advocacy training, strategic liaisons (SNH, SEPA etc), SEFF (funders) forum, communications, admin, finance and fundraising. Very positive results of autumn fundraising noted.

SEW: Following the 2017 review SEW would not be taken forward ‘as is’; rather, several events would be held in parliament under LINK’s banner through the year. The usual SEW evening reception would continue, next year taking place on 17th April and themed around the Year of Young People.

Meetings with Ministers continued, albeit on a new rhythm since the Brexit vote. LINK had met with Fergus Ewing (Rural Affairs) post-election and Roseanna Cunningham (Environment) twice in 2017. She had also addressed the EEB conference and there was close liaison with her officials and with Ian Jardine, SG Environment Adviser, over Brexit. LINK had also met with Mike Russell and hoped for a further meeting, and with Ian Duncan. A meeting with Fergus Ewing had been held on 5th December, where he had offered to meet on 6-monthly basis.

***ACTION: Groups to flag to Daphne if they have issues to raise with Ministers should hear***

**2. Recognising LINK’s achievements in last year**

Wildlife Crime: Challenging area, though RSPB and Scottish Badgers had had positive meetings with Crown Office and Police Scotland. National Wildlife Crime Unit would have new staff, so scope for improvement. The aim of these intermediaries appeared to be to not increase the number of reported crimes, so this remains a barrier, and there was limited proactiveness in these bodies. There had been some very good liaison with Transport Scotland on several big projects such as A9, Aberdeen periphery, new Forth Crossing. The Subgroup was developing its species focusses.

Deer: Very positive that the National Ecological Network had been taken up by LINK, as a common voice behind deer work. Subgroup was influencing SNH.

Species Champions: Sign-up rate very good – 95 of 120 MSPs at this date. Organically, getting traction, though LINK was not fully utilising yet. Very good to have support of Calum Langsdale SC Intern, to support the initiative. Sister Links had copied the idea.

Hill tracks: Positive direction, funds raised and report to come soon. Had changed advocacy approach to make hill tracks relevant to other policy developments. 300+ new tracks in last 3 years though. Subgroup greatly supported by George Allan of North East Mountain Trust. Hilltracks would be covered by the planned review of grouse moors, government-led.

Economy: Significant shift in SNP’s focus on economy and sustainability where we would previously have expected oil and gas to feature heavily. Programme for Government had used LINK wording on sustainability and transition to low carbon economy and its benefits. LINK had also influenced trade unions to talk more about a just transition.

Woodland Subgroup: having impact on the current Forestry Bill, including amendments secured.

Climate (coordination by task-and-finish group supported by Phoebe):

There is recognition of importance of peatland restoration - and a good target in the Climate Bill.

Blue carbon arguments – to be included as research topic on Climate Bill.

Food & Farming: Engaged SLE and other groups, and some consensus around strategic objectives (devil in detail). Have a clear LINK narrative which is getting some traction. Relates to climate.

Planning: Planning Bill was laid this week, and includes some problems on which LINK will comment. Equal Rights of Appeal not included but SNP are the only party not to support it.

Marine: Aquaculture subgroup forming and working on policy paper has been a huge development. Positive engagement with Roseanna Cunningham – announced emergency MPA in Loch Carron, opened Sea Scotland conference and launched MPA monitoring strategy. Also positive conversations with advisory bodies (Marine Scotland and SNH).

Air Passenger Duty: Also pushed into long grass. Thanks to Mike Robinson as rep on stakeholder forum, LINK (led by Economics Group) and member responses.

Brexit: the profile of devolution in the collective NGO efforts around Brexit would not be there without Scottish LINK. This would not have been achieved by simply member organisations.

Various ministerial speeches including on active travel spend were now very much ‘on message’ with the views and asks of relevant LINK members.

Building resilience in wildlife and habitats as critical adaptation action had gained traction e.g. in terms of seabirds in the wake of eradicating mammals from various islands; the role of LINK in this should be acknowledged. The profile of the issue of invasive non-native species was increasing.

The latest Programme for Government was positively received by LINK and it was very likely that this had come from years of LINK advocacy.

**3. Key ambitions for the eighteen months to Summer 2019**

Horizon Scanning in terms of the Scottish political situation, upcoming legislation

Forestry: Delivery on the land that is managed for the public, the National Forest Estate. Planting Targets. Review of Scottish Forestry Strategy as a key document during 2018. Recreational opportunities may be cut – less staff and move away from this policy.

Recreational opportunities in relation: are these being eroded? It will matter that the public keeps an eye on what transpires. Loss of expert staff in the forestry sector who dealt with access, biodiversity and specialisms may well mean a shift away from these as policy objectives.

Deer: Deer management review group continues to 2019. SNH to report early 2019 on impacts of Deer Management Groups. There is movement now on lowland deer issues.

Biodiversity: Look beyond 2020 for gains. What does the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy need to look like, and how to secure opportunity for LINK in the new high-level group jointly chaired by Cab Secs Roseanna and Fergus? Also, more development ahead of National Ecological Network in this period. In relation to the Protected Areas working group, there are moves among SNH to put function of protected areas into looser terms; rather than having features as species with targets, it will be ‘ecosystem health’ focussed with risk of being too vague to monitor and of losses of species and habitats. INNS: Species and Habitats group work looks positive.

Climate: Opportunities in Climate Change Bill for increasing targets in line with Paris Agreement, with chances for amendments for wider environment and biodiversity. New round of review due for Climate Adaptation Programme for Scotland – keeping an eye on that, NEN could fit in here.

Planning: Planning Bill will be going through Parliament. More effort over Equal Rights of Appeal needed. National Performance Framework and its Indicators review relates.

Brexit (Or not): Withdrawal Bill. Environment Bill with unknowns around boundaries for UK vs. Devolveds and over whether a Scottish Bill will be needed. Land Bill. Fisheries Bill. Trade discussions.

Marine: Future of Fisheries – Marine Scotland. Islands Bill. MSFD is under review. MPA network completion and management for remaining inshore MPAs. PMF review. National Marine Plan review. Sea Scotland June 2018 – will focus on marine planning, community involvement/empowerment and young people.

Aquaculture: ECCLR will be looking at this.

EU: Water Framework Directive will be put to Fitness Check (along with associated Directives – Bathing Waters, Nitrates, Urban Waste Water, Groundwater, Environmental Quality Regs). LINK has no active grouping to put forward response. EEB has input already. Blueprint for Water will be active and is interested in collaborating with any/all of the Links over this REFIT.

Eye on IUCN and EEB and how to use these memberships more, esp. on leaving the EU. LINK was a member of both. Stuart Brooks of NTS chairs UK member committee of IUCN and Johnny Hughes SWT is a regional councillor for IUCN. Noted Governance Group plans to meet with both in 2018.

National Performance Framework Indicators review – other sectors see this as significant. LINK has worked with Oxfam, Carnegie, STUC on outcomes. Timely soon to profile LINK’s asks again.

Culture Strategy – making sure environment is covered, esp. as Heritage Lottery Fund may be the source which Govt sees funding outcomes of the strategy.

Funding for environment - SNH, Marine Scotland and other agencies are increasingly feeling the pinch to deliver statutory functions. This poses risks also for members in terms of grants/awards to deliver work for some of these bodies.

Lobbying Bill – A further briefing for members will be circulated in early 2018

Islands Bill – little capacity in LINK though RSPB’s recent evidence was given on network’s behalf.

Scottish Land Commission – work needed by LINK members including Landscape Subgroup. In terms of interpretations and ambition among other.

Consultation on Good Food Nation Bill – through Scottish Food Coalition. Spring 2018.

Circular Economy Bill – less clear when that might come along.

2018 is the Year of Young People. 2019 Year of Coast and Waters. 2019 also Year of the Salmon. SEW 2018 and Species Champions work are already addressing year of young people.

Sea Scotland, June 2018

National Coastal Change Assessment by SG (led by SNH) – looking at coastal erosion in next 25 years. Hopefully an opportunity for real forward thinking coastal plan with climate change and adaptation. Can bring in blue carbon work – fought for that to be included in there, and now is as a set of research. Need to tie that all together.

Work of LINK Environment Strategy Subgroup is progressing, talk of governance and tribunals. No specific legislation on the horizon. It will look at governance gap so there may be opportunity.

***Proposal: Develop 2020 gateway to marshall aiming for no net loss and a.m. gain a.p?***

There was commitment from Scottish Government for environmental policy framework – an opportunity for us to bring together all these areas with post-2020 ambition.

Landscape – was raising its profile in Scottish policy. Landscape Inst Scotland has bigger profile and is promoting broader thinking on landscapes round Scotland. LINL Landscape Subgroup could work with LIS in coalition, per food coalition model of working.

[Forward farming and countryside commission](https://medium.com/rsa-reports/food-farming-and-countryside-commission-prospectus-3f6b3805628a) – probably only England and Wales focussed; initiative funded by Esmee Fairbairn; it has taken views in Scotland; however other Scottish NGOs feel it would need be resourced to have presence here, to be effective in countering other interests.

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – UK and SG were signed up. LINK had only pursued opportunistically. SCVO were establishing a wider network which will offer LINK opportunity in respect of various aspirations. RSPB and SWT also interested in this area.

25-year plan for the environment – so far England focussed only.

Species Champions – using Champions to help address areas such as woodlands which straddle environmental issues, using Champions in coalitions, so that members can allocate their effort in the most effective way. Species champions event planned in May. Climate Bill in Spring 2018 will be a good opportunity to highlight species champions – let them know how their species will be affected by climate change. LINK plans were to target young people. LINK had a role to target member’s members to call for strong targets by 2050 or sooner. A lot of public pressure will be needed.

General points:

Meeting noted there were a lot of potential areas and opportunities, and that LINK could not do everything and would have to say no to some of these.

Developing advocacy strategy: Helen Todd noted that to have an impact relied in part on having clear advocacy strategies: developing an advocacy strategy helped to focus work within the groups and subgroups. A LINK template was available, and Daphne could advise if needed.

***ACTION: Groups and Subgroups to ensure advocacy strategies***

LINK-level campaigning o Brexit: Helen reported that the LINK Board had noted environmental implications of Brexit were not featured in the press/wider debate as often or powerfully as industry (farmers, fishermen) and trade arguments etc, and had discussed the value of a public engagement strategy to support our parliaments-focussed Brexit advocacy. Daphne reported that there had been a UK wide pledge, shared via Wildlife and Countryside Link targeting UK MPs and LINK wanted to pursue a similar action for devolved administrations on legislative consent but that was impossible because of the N.I. situation. However, an advocacy and communications group was developing as part of Brexit Subgroup to review potential for a campaign around the environment/Brexit. The thinking was to target members’ memberships and the wider electorate to demonstrate to politicians (by petitions, open letters, etc) that they have ordinary people’s support on environmental needs and issues. WTS, RSPB, WWF and Daphne so far involved in developing the campaign concept, others welcome, likely teleconference later 2017/ early 2018. Noted that this was also looking at how this could link with Species Champions, and Year of Young People. Have been in touch with Young Scot, Youth LINK, Youth Parliament. Do not wish to duplicate what members do but empower. RSPB was also working with young people – workshop in March, open agenda still; care would be needed in relation to highly charged politics of Brexit and a degree of political mischief-making afoot. SCRA could reach out to awards groups of various sorts. Meeting welcomed the proposal of a campaign; members were concerned and frustrated to know what to do; such a campaign could give focus. To date LINK had had recent wins from Cab Sec confirming that Scotland needs to see maintenance of EU principles (precautionary, polluter pays, etc). LINK asking for loss of EU tribunals to be addressed and may be opportunity to flag environmental courts when SG consult on this. Now working to see how to make Gove’s suggestion to maintain these as a policy document (did not give the ‘teeth’ we would like). LINK had been called for evidence, parliamentary reviews, our work had been quoted in plenaries.

Meeting also noted Board discussion about making next Programme for Government a goal in relation to LINK’s KPI around advocacy (i.e. as voice, effecting change), identifying key asks as hooks for the future. This would need development of thinking, could include NEN, Performance Framework changes, outcomes for Government’s strategic review of environmental policies, outcomes of more proactive Species Champions (as result of more planned use of them by LINK and its groups), climate bill targets, planning bill impacts and more. Groups and Subgroups were encouraged to give this thought.

***ACTION: Groups & Subgroups asked to identify their key asks of government for 1-2 years***

Upcoming opportunities, initiatives providing hooks for LINK advocacy

2019 year of Coasts and Waters / Blue Planet profile raising – surf on this wave

National Coastal Change Assessment (SNH led) identifying coastal erosion to 2050 – plan a response; together with Climate Bill and Climate Adaptation Prog we can push for SG to do a long-term plan for our coasts and identify research needed in climate change plan to inform this. Building resilience in nature to climate change (eradications etc).

Also in relation to Climate – could focus on land use in terms of climate benefits and reducing emissions; worth identifying strategic targets for 2030/40/50 to help build political space for robust decisions; check with officials and Cab Sec about willingness to include resilience as issue. Biodiversity duty also as theme which can help deliver readiness for climate change.

Infrastructure assessment programme by Scottish Government – obvious focus to check whether infrastructure is going to reduce / increase carbon. Green party looking at this, makes senses for LINK to do so. Climate Bill discussions have noted Scottish budget needs to be aligned with climate change plan.

Closing this session Helen Todd reminded members that the afternoon session should choose from the list horizon-scanned (above) as forward plans were reviewed in the afternoon session.

**4. Structures, priorities, amendments to forward plans**

Charles Dundas chaired session on where/how LINK’s groups could take forward points flagged above, noting the morning decision that LINK structures are fit for purpose, that now was not a time for changes to priorities, and that work can be done on inter-group-subgroup linkages.

National Forest Estate / Planting targets – don’t allow step back from good mixed use, to more productive forestry. There are some regulatory and practice safeguards and CONFOR may hold line against unsustainable practice. Crossover with LINK land use and planning work about what, where, value of trees on farms; could protect from sitka blocks. Opp to fix disconnect between agri and forestry, for win-wins. SG’s mapping exercise for planting targets could aim at right-right. This would support call for retention of FCS expertise to advise on multi-use-and-purpose approach. Regional LU pilots work relates. Present this in a way which Forest Enterprise would want to fund.

***ACTION*: *Workshop for Land Use & Reform, Food & Farming, Deer, Woodland Subgroups, and outdoor recreation interests in Jan or Feb***

Scottish Forestry Strategy – consultation in 2018 thanks to LINK pressure. Focus for us is integration with other strategies, climate resilience, flood prevention. Woodland Subgroup on the case.

Deer – S Pepper’s review is reporting in early 2019. Feeds into forestry (above). SNH to report on DMGs in 2018. New thing will be lowland deer focus. Other members welcome to Deer Subgroup – contact Duncan or Maggie. Deer Subgroup asked to keep staff informed where it is feeding into reviews/stakeholder groups and to share advocacy plan with staff.

***ACTION: Deer Subgroup keep staff posted of advocacy plans and liaisons***

Grouse moor review recently announced, though terms of reference unknown. It will cover Hilltracks issues. Also relates to forestry and planting targets, land use and management for public benefit. Susan Davies SWT is on advisory group feeding into this and LINK could organise one-off meetings or process if needed, to input collective view. There was scope for a LINK Thinks piece on growing role of civic society in determining what happens to land in Scotland.

***ACTION: LINK Thinks piece by Land use and Land Reform Subgroup***

Protected Areas – When a wider LINK view is needed to input to the official working group, Paul Walton to take soundings from Wildlife Subgroup

***ACTION: Wildlife Subgroup (Paul W and Craig M)***

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and non-native invasive species - SG Strategic review of Biodiversity Strategy planned. Need a distinctive LINK voice and will be taken forward by the Wildlife Sub-group, although core to much of LINK’s work. Scotland has very good legislation and code of practice on invasive species, but failing on implementation. Invasives one of 5 cross-cutting drivers of biodiversity loss. Need case studies/examples. And maybe voices.

Relates to NEN where thinking around this SWT idea is now well developed in LINK. NEN thinking will look to Marine and Planning Groups about how NEN fits with their advocacy. Issue is the dire implementation in Scotland despite our good legislation. Target for post 2020? Need small workshop to lead off? Make biodiversity (and not meeting targets) key in the Government’s review of environmental framework, so our USP could be where next for biodiversity in 2030/40/50, to unite a host of things being done by Government.

***ACTION: Wildlife Subgroup identify best way of developing thinking further***

Climate Change Bill - Members of Food and Farming Sub-group active in pushing for greener farming methods with reduced emissions. Member of Economics Group is involved in Just Transition. Will tie in with Species Champion initiative to highlight species related threats to MSPs. Will be a focus of the LINK Environmental Reception. Phoebe assisting with this for a few months.

Climate Change Adaptation. Need to find out what SG doing about looking at adaptation again. Of relevance to Wildlife Sub-group and NEN, and Marine Group on coastal management, blue carbon. Meeting concluded that engagement on Climate Adaptation would likely be step too far for Wildlife Subgroup and Marine Group.

***ACTION: Coordinate as much cross-LINK working as possible on Climate Change Bill***

Planning Bill – Changing the draft is part of our objective, Planning Group agreeing key issues now and will come to other Groups and Subgroups. Timescale is short. Concerns include loss of supplementary planning guidance, loss of main issues reports, only sops to communities and in terms of local place plans, no equal rights of appeal.

***ACTION: Planning Group to consult with other groups and subgroups shortly***

Brexit – Subgroup working well, informing members more widely, pulling in intel from groups and subgroups as needed, continue as is for 2018, but note that Withdrawal Bill may pull on capacity meant for other areas of collective work.

Years of Youth (2018), Coast & Waters (2019), Salmon (2019) – Noted. Bear these in mind, use as hooks. Species Champions work is exploring what organisations are doing with youth to clarify if an initiative by LINK per se would be useful. Age limit up to 24 is our thinking – and igniting passion for policy!

Good Food Nation Bill – Food & Farming Subgroup are on the case. Marine Group also interested because of plastic pollution and Food and Farming Sub-group are interested in reducing food waste.

***ACTION: MG and Food & Farming Subgroup to talk, swiftly***

Circular Economy Bill – Economics Group may address this, capacity permitting. Timescale and content not yet available. Deposit Return scheme relates.

Inshore MPA management, and extensions to MPAs, marine planning, priority marine features work, Inshore Fishing, Aquaculture – Marine Group on case with all this. Fisheries work may either be via a Scottish Bill or as part of Brexit negs. 2 Scottish committees looking at economic and environmental impacts of aquaculture, so work ahead for MG’s Aquaculture Subgroup which is finalising a statement now; aquaculture a huge industry, minimal strategic planning involved, with target of doubling as part of national marine plan.

REFIT of Water related directives – Not considered critical and capacity is too stretched.

Species Champions – covered in various ways above, very active, will look at getting coalitions of Champs together.

***ACTION: Groups to think about best use***

Using our EEB and IUCN memberships more in the lead up to Brexit – Next but one Governance Group meeting will include additional slot with J Hughes and S Brooks.

***ACTION: Governance Group’s March/April meeting***

National Performance Framework Indicators Review - Economics Group supported by Daphne

Cultural Strategy - Linked to priorities of HLF and environmental funding so environment needs to be fundamental to strategy. Ad hoc engagement through small group which met SG’s lead in October.

Funding of Government Agencies - Concern noted about the impacts on SNH and Marine Scotland among other of budget cuts. Need examples of where delivery is affected. Governance Group leading. Also for raising with Cab Sec.

Lobbying Bill - Governance Group. Briefing circulated during 2017. Will continue to keep members informed.

Islands Bill - RSPB active on this. Need to reflect disproportionate biodiversity of islands and to include uninhabited islands. Keep members posted.

Scottish Land Commission - Land Group on the case.

Government Strategic Policy Review on Environment - Need to find out scope and timing. See as an opportunity to progress agendas. Daphne to lead.

Food, Farming and Countryside Commission - Broad ToR, UK wide, 2-year enquiry hosted by RSA. Asked for a parallel commission for Scotland, only ffered separate commissioners and chapter. Meeting agreed not good enough.

Environmental Law Centre. Led by Legal Governance Sub-group.

UNSDGs. All to consider and bear in mind. Investment decisions and lack of investment in low carbon. Economics Group to take up again.

**5**. **Member Updates**

Ramblers Scotland – marking 15th anniversary of Land Reform Act with event on 15 January 2018, invitations circulating. Will publish ‘What Access Rights Mean’.

SCRA – Petition against erosion of service - seeking SG recognition of report on findings on ranger services and SG resourcing in future.

RZSS – Commissioning an independent review from IUCN to inform an action plan; will report late summer 2018.

Scottish Badgers - Receive no SNH support and have no contact from SNH despite badgers being a protected species.

SWT – Coul Links golf course development likely to go to public inquiry.

APRS – Won their Deposit Return Campaign; thanks for support from others esp. MCS, RS and FoES, (also Greenpeace). Much work now into developing system of design and management and countering arguments of a few remaining opponents.

RSPB – Judicial Review decision impact. Invasive species – huge project on Orkney to tackle stoats. Announcement due Feb on Shiant Isles rat eradication project. Would like a rolling programme of island restoration. Also West Atlantic Woodlands Rhododendron initiative has been taken over by Woodland Trust (thanks). HLF Scottish Committee and case officers now briefed and receptive on INNS issues.

Plantlife – Flagged the importance of movement of plants for biodiversity.

Cairngorms Campaign – 1 year before new town mooted to be started, CNPA have made controversial additions to requirements and CC hope this may have effect.

Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust: Reached 100,000km of surveying. Going to try winter surveying. New app to enable public to report sightings and decisions to be made on how to handle all new data.

MCS: Thanks to APRS for work on Deposit Return. Advocating Circular Economy from beach clean activities. Asking for environmental legislation on all single use plastics. Have a parliamentary event. Window of opportunity to make use of heightened awareness about plastic pollution.

FoES: Fracking has been banned in Scotland. Thanks to other members involved.

SWBG: Beavers achieved ‘native status’ last year. ‘Protected Status’ promised by SG for February(ish). Fundraising for an Education Officer. Doing some talks aimed at youth and community groups to improve awareness and understanding.

Nourish: Early next year will be engaging people to talk about the importance of a ‘good food nation’ in prep for Bill; anticipate health and poverty inputs and would like to ensure strong environment input with help of LINK members and their local groups.

Planning for Democracy. Establishing network of peer to peer support for people involved in planning issues round Scotland. Barrier is traumatisation-depression. To assist with this, PD plans to fundraise to support talking and singing (health benefits as well as spreading the word) about the issues.

**AOB**

LINK would meet Andrew Bachell of JMT in January

Notes: JA, ED, PC ; December 2017