

LINK strategic planning discussion, November 2015

Attending: Helen Todd (RS, Chair), John Mayhew (APRS), John Thomson (APRS/SCNP, Landscape TFC), Aedan Smith (RSPB, Planning TFC), Jonathan Wordsworth (AS), Diarmid Hearn (NTS, Agriculture TFC), Pete Ritchie (Nourish), Alistair Mackinnon (SAGS), Rob Brooker (BES), Calum Duncan (MCS, Marine TFC), Tim Ambrose (CC, LINK Treasurer), Matthew Crighton (FOES, Economics TFC), Davie Black (Plantlife), Sarah Robinson (RZSS), Hebe Carus (RSPB), Paul Walton (RSPB), Vicki Swales (RSPB), Beryl Leatherland (SWCL), Tom Leatherland (SWCL, Freshwater TFC), Jeff Knott (WWT), Charles Dundas (WTS), Ross Finnie (LINK President),

Nick Underdown (MPAO), Phoebe Cochrane (SEO), Andy Myles (AM), Rea Cris (AO), Jen Anderson (CO), Alice Walsh (DO).

Apologies Simon Jones (SWT), Lloyd Austin (RSPB), Alan Fox (SOC), Sam Gardner (WWFS), Anne Youngman (BCT), Gus Jones (BSCG), Kathy Wormald (Froglife), Paul Kirkland (BC), Sarah Dolman (WDC).

Introductions & updates (Helen Todd)

Aims of day - The meeting was the network opportunity to plan for 12-18 months ahead, spanning UK and Scottish parliamentary elections and further debate over more powers to Scotland, to consider contexts (political, environmental, broad economic), relationships with audiences, allies and others, and consider our capacity as members (in terms of what organisations commit to doing as LINK) and our resources for collective work as LINK.

Membership – open door continuing and Trustees encouraged members to seek contact as needed, as they did wish to talk to any members with concerns. JMT's resignation was noted.

Elections – UK and Scottish elections in next 18 months, involvement important but keeping that simple was challenging (being a broad and deep network). Networking continued with EEB, joint Links (useful meeting in October in Glasgow), and there were plans to develop links with local and community groups.

Wider relationships – TFs continue to develop own liaisons, and Board level eye was on wider policy community as capacity allowed. LINK was in touch with SNH about the robustness of its proposed corporate plan in the face of challenging political realities. LINK was invited to join new NFUS proposed forum of stakeholder interests in the farmed environment. Meeting discussed, agreeing it was important for this to include food/consumers, access, landscape; that subject to good scope and remit, LINK should get involved and give it a try. Hilltracks discussions ahead were inclusive of LINK interests. There were signs that the network was succeeding in getting out of the purely environment box, being recognised as broad and diverse and relevant. Board met SEPA, SNH and Parks more or less annually. LINK to meet Bob McIntosh (head SG EnFor) early 2015, had met Minister three times this year and hoped for similar relationship with Aileen McLeod.

Energy positioning update - Timely for LINK to collectively revisit and update key positions on energy - Time to Act, Avoiding Conflicts in the Marine Environment (tabled) and final position on landscape and energy (due early 2015). Substantial work went into these, they covered a lot of ground and the review should refresh collective memories on extent of shared ground. Meeting suggested that if positions keep to principles this makes it easier for members to support; noted that though Fracking & Unconventional Gas is a challenge for some organisations, the environment movement needs to

have some position; review needs to be clear about scope and need (climate and sources we favour / fossil fuels / community ownership / renewables development / what do we need to address); noted MTF advice that LINK needs to keep ahead of game with an update of ACME which was good at the time but is being overtaken by developments; should also involve discussion of outside influence causing internal fracture. On this basis the meeting supported proposal for review and for use of DPF to fund facilitation; remit to circulate to members early 2015.

Funding -- currently good though LINK uncertain in terms of public and trust funding for core work, so continued to invest extra staff time in fundraising. Some TFs planned to bid for funds to employ project officers (PTF for Equal Rights of Appeal campaign coordination and Wildlife Forum for taking the Species Champion into youth and business sectors). These plans would have an impact on core capacity and Board and CO were alert to that. Core staffing complement to grow from early 2015; had operated since 2012 on a tighter staff complement which was challenging; now reviewing functions. Hugh Green retires in April so review will address remit of his successor.

Evaluation – Thanks to Convenors for work on TF evaluation which was very useful; Board considers outcomes. View is that much is going in the right direction, though there are times and ways where robustness of our advocacy can be strengthened; Board advises more solid advocacy plans, with clear, concrete asks, negotiations strategies including topline and compromise positions, means of achieving goals explored in advance, use of different players within TFs to help deliver strategy. We can't afford to be too nice; the environment needs us to shout for it.

Member body plans & aspirations around progressing these through LINK

Archaeology Scotland – DIG IT initiative in conjunction with others is a series of events and an international alliance; to circulate details. Adopt a Monument continues as other big scheme. Continue to engage in LINK Agri, Woodlands, Landscape and Funding TFs. Main aspiration is for political agenda to change from May 2015 with environment better embedded.

Nourish Scotland - 3 priorities to 2020; the right to food, elimination of food banks, responsibility on government to feed its citizens; food and farming policy, steering food economy away from long supply chains. (Supports SAGS points – useful work to be done with local authorities on food growing strategies.) Within LINK – sustainable food and farming manifesto, to get better traction in CAP/SRDP discussions next time round.

Scottish Allotments and Gardens – Input to toxic land work (testing); engaging in Community Empowerment Bill very actively and sense Minister and Chair of committee do not want a presumption that LAs will provide land; Bill negates legislation to 1892 (duties of provision) and changes to a duty to reduce waiting lists; may split plots; SAGS position paper would circulate. Interested in food policy agenda and planning for availability of land to grow food so would work with LINK to look at LA duties, woodlands, agri.

RSPB – aware many employees and that most member bodies punch above their weight. Case work unit – every wind farm, roads, advisory dept working with others making a difference with priority areas; research – fundamental primacy of biodiversity research; land use, marine, landholding active reserve dept. 243 priorities! 44 priority bird species, 101 2nd priority bird species, 88 priority non bird species, 10 priority habitats in Scotland, focusing on those. Changing focus back to biological outcomes, measured every year, a strength. EU Directives (Refit) number 1 priority, potential for them to be weakened is strong, delighted that Joint Links are working on this.

Major challenges under SRDP, ongoing struggles. NFUS access to decision makers and clout has been very high. Welcomes ATF approach to new NFUS forum.

Biodiversity and Government – taking to SG about their research strategy, RESAS, SNH, economic use. Misunderstanding of ecosystem services and natural capital agenda, given them the chance to dismiss

protection, saying that traditional conservation has failed. Want to change this misperception. We need to use the economic agenda to strengthen our case, not to dump the good things we have. Government and SNH are not there yet. Biogeographic approach project in Scotland.

Across UK new strapline, giving nature a home, lots of ways to deliver it, vote for Bob campaign. In Westminster election context getting politicians to sign up.

Nature Directives, Climate and SCCS, Paris talks, energy renewables peatlands, 'Love of' campaign, food and farming. Also flag persecution of birds of prey grouse moors, more thinking on defining sustainable grouse moor management. Marine, water, implementation of Water Framework Directive, & flood risk management.

Working through LINK on all top 3 priorities, (and also the SCCS) food & farming, and wildlife crime.

Friends of the Earth Scotland – energy issues and justice to the fore. Work on climate change with SCCS (hosted at FoES), mobilising active engagement for Paris COP Dec 2016, Campaigning on FUG, community renewables. Looking to revise the paper *Power of Scotland* jointly with RSPB and WWFS. Access to justice work on Aarhus principles. Air pollution campaign to engage around transport and people on the street. PT sustainable finance officer working on divestment and local banks following up Sept 2014 conference with a view to proposing revival of green new deal. Convene LINK economics TF looking at GDP alternatives, and helping to organise LINK member workshop in Feb 2015 on economics and the environment. FOES local groups active on biomass campaign (Tayside, eg) and raising profile on other local development issues with LAs.

Ramblers – 4 staff in Scotland. Vision process GB wide. Scotland vision to be launched. Promoting walking and getting people active. Working with doctors surgeries and support groups. Sorting out governance issues internally. Through LINK will continue to engage in protecting countryside, landscape & energy, deer, as now. LINK not covering access and paths, RS in the Active Travel Alliance (as are other members). LL&TPA banning camping a big concern. Land Reform Bill -opportunities to work through LINK.

WWF Scotland (not present) – Helen Todd reported that WWFS was one of the member bodies which had flagged that LINK has more scope than it currently makes use of to put the combined weight of many behind messages/campaigns calling for x or y. Could TFCs see their priorities being served in this way, with light resource input? Such messaging could cover areas not covered by our TFs but which might be a 'glue' for all, such as a sustainable development message.

Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland: please note 30 May 2015 presentation by Colin Prior at Napier, to raise profile and recruit members. Just finished development of a fundraising strategy, now implementing. Revising the National Parks project jointly with SCNP. In next few months will be a parliamentary petition for more national parks, and focus on manifestos and fundraising.

UK deposit alliance on drinks containers, CPRE asking for ARPS (and MCS) to lead in Scotland, new territory.

Revealing local landscapes focus in Central Belt, identify and draw up action plan. Have 50% funding from SNH, will be looking for rest of it.

Involvement in Landscape, National Parks, Planning and SEFF TFs is very helpful.

Marine Conservation Society – Sea is a major component of Scottish territory and resource. MCS a small to medium UK body active in Scotland and fairly good at cross-border operations. Priorities for all staff are clean seas and beaches, protection for marine wildlife. Initiatives are Beachwatch, citizen science, informing marine litter strategy where they have and want to get concrete outputs such as fishing boats not having to pay to dispose of waste. Much science and policy work. Active in resource efficiency debate such as plastic bag charge, involved in UK Deposit Alliance (which is having impact abroad for waste and environment activity). MCS does Good Beach Guide, guide to water quality,

sustainable fishing, advise supermarkets on seafood. Engaging in Clyde 2020 ecosystem improvement initiative, where there are biodiversity gains available. MCS is a partner in Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (training divers to go to depth). Do Seasearch and new posts will help organise dive trips for evidence for protection/need of. Do MPAs work mainly through LINK MTF which Calum coordinates for LINK; want to see MPAs protected from scallop dredging and trawling, and have aspirations too for nature conservation gains including for the basking shark.

British Ecological Society – Learned society for ecologists, all voluntary, which aims to be relatively neutral though members support stances on particular things such as conserving biodiversity and stopping climate change. Rob is on the Scottish Policy Group and the policy team in London focusses on Westminster. Interested in use of good ecological science in policy making and engaging with policy makers for mutual understanding. Do series of events including in pubs, a policy training day for 30 young ecologists on policy process with intros to policy makers, do a conference each year. Glad of information on the policy scene in Scotland. Will engage in SEWeek. Will hold annual meeting in Edinburgh in December 2015 and hope for parliamentary reception of ecologists. Aim through LINK to work better with the ‘neutral’ voice of science. Can be critical friend for policy complementing environmental campaigners.

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust – UK and International work. Focus on sustainable use and management of water. Working wetlands concept, multi benefits, regs in E&Wales are going backwards, eg dredging following last year’s floods, messaging about natural alternatives is not hitting home. Environment Agency was tasked to review all rivers that could be dredged for the autumn statement, a concern. WWT working with WCL partners on this. Lead ammunition is a big focus for next year. Conservation of migratory species regs coming out, a leap forward, will be looking at the impact of it in UK.

Wetland manifesto, 10 key principles in run up to general election comms to all parties.

International – wider wetland issues in Asia; EU Directives; and Invasive Non Native Species.
Link – limited involvement and capacity in Scotland. Thanks to all and will keep abreast and chip in where possible.

Scottish Wild Land Group – very small and entirely voluntary, no premises. Make use of LINK meeting room. Run by steering group of 7-8, hold AGM, rely on subscriptions. Appreciate engaging in LINK for access to the wider network, the strong voice, sign-up opportunities to things that support SWLG to express its views and raise its own profile. Publishes Wild Land News which in 2015 will do a push on re-wilding; on which SWLG are talking with various. Respond to consultations where capacity allows. Offering (Tom Leatherland) to convene LINK’s freshwater taskforce to respond to various consultations ahead. Interested in review of EU nature directives.

Plantlife – 6 priority habitats and key wild plants species. Important Plant areas. 52 hotspots, fragmentary & isolated, management and non-management. Focus on ecological networks and zones of expansion.

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, 2020 challenge to turn round perceptions that nature conservation has failed. Delivery through SRDP, the only money there is.
LINK – involvement in SLU, ATF, WF, Deer and Woodland.

Royal Zoological Society – in relation to LINK, main focus of interest is the Wildlife Forum. Wildcats, Beavers, Hoverfly are issues of interest. Run a double-decker bus round Scotland (RBS supported) promoting the wildcat, and this involves giving lessons in schools and talks in communities. This links with the LINK species champions initiative.

Woodland Trust – Deer management, very appreciated of Deer TF and hoping for more progress in 2015. Wildlife Forum work on Native Woodland survey of Scotland, main policy area for WTS to better enhance Scottish woodlands. Tree planting in the right places, work on compensatory planting,

identifying the problem that its not happening or is badly done, raising game there and joining up with other projects. Commemoration of WW1 – planting, big project in Dreghorn, engaging with people. New chapter for Scottish forests, at early stage.

Cairngorms Campaign – Began in 90 as ‘Save the Cairngorms Campaign’ over threats at the time, esp. the then proposed funicular. With the establishment of the Park, members decided to drop ‘Save from the title’. However, CNPA seems to see an obligation over housing including proposed new town opposite Aviemore, and the idea that the Park’s sustainability aim should prevail where there is competing pressure between aims doesn’t appear to operate. There is more pressure for more housing including for holiday and commuting. 4 years ago, the Campaign and two other groups mounted legal challenge to housing allocations in local plan; this has to date been unsuccessful. CC supports the concept of Parks but Scottish version is not as Parks were conceived, and finds CNP severely deficient although the Park Authority sees itself as the model for the future.

National Trust for Scotland – 200k for advocacy work covering built, natural and cultural heritage; 3 people, half of that need for internal work. One third of discretionary spend is the LINK subscription. 3 years into advocacy strategy. Tested trustees on themes – energy (bottom), landscape (top). Wrote to members to support JMT on Stronelairg windfarm. Getting a picture of next few years, what is coming up. Charities and how they deliver on SD, reframing conservation as a public benefit rather than a constraint on development.

Review of Network progress and contexts

Be mindful of drivers, crosscutting issues, and the importance of a change in messaging by TFs in relation to how the new Scottish administration seems to be thinking, and making stronger links to the social justice agenda.

LINK capacity for maintaining relationships across the policy community is limited; issues need to drive liaison, such as our carbon bubble paper, and dialogue with parts of the business sector.

Frame our manifestos asks in ways that connect with agendas which decision makers see as key. Draft 2015 manifesto framework now circulating was framed around already agreed referendum challenge asks for Scotland’s environment and our response to the Smith Commission, and highlighted UK relevant issues including fiscal and fracking. Our RC process had worked well and allowed us to avoid being diverted into party politics. There would be constitutional discussion about membership of the EU which LINK could play in similar way – ie, ten ways we want to see the UK live within the EU and asking how various campaign approaches can deliver these.

2016 LINK manifesto could be further streamlined with asks relevant to the Holyrood Government. Important to get both of these ready in time to influence the election campaign periods and players: strategic decisions were already in sight.

Should link to social justice – show this as a face of environmental justice – e g in preambles.

These manifesto processes should help members to put together their specific asks, too.

Make sure of a spotlight on economics for both elections, with asks developed by our ETF.

Narrative – ours, about why the environment matters (draft by Andy M and Paul W had been circulated to stimulate discussion) – This was felt to be a good start needing discussion and to be more succinct. Flag care for Scottish local environment, ways of involving people, benefits that are economic and environmental and no tension if economy drives the right change; consider what alliance we want to build for this narrative. We’ve opened conversations with the policy community about overlaps between our and their agendas: how to move out into social justice across EU and globally. In this, consider the public support angle of our advocacy, more than we have done to date. Now is really important timing for harnessing interested public behind our agenda, radical independence campaign, etc – this is crucial to our agenda, perhaps esp the younger voters? SD less fashionable than eg Land Reform, loss of urban greenspace, which overlaps into social and

environmental justice. We need to engage mentally with the social justice agenda to see and make these links and look at this in EU and global terms. LINK isn't nimble and the TFs are our main route – TFs overlapping with land use and reform especially. Let's not let land reform go by without gains for the environment. Do we have capacity – we can't afford not to find ways of engaging in that debate, and in the discussion of devolving Crown Estate in Scotland and to local level. TF plans could usefully look at where asks are being addressed to. **Action: Andy and Paul to invite players to small steering group to develop thinking and agree how to deliver the message**

Review of TF plans in context of above discussions

Agriculture – Reframing focus to take in consumption / food; through main TF and not a subgroup, and involving Nourish Scotland, now. Will keep general grind on detail of CAP etc moving. Thinking for longer term about how land should be used, therefore linking to LUS and our SLU task force. Considering better connections with food stakeholders, crofters, environmentally-focussed farmers. Aiming to improve capacity with a bid for a project officer to support work. Diarmid Hearn will be standing down as Convenor and resource/capacity is an issue for the TF. Advocacy strategy to take in the intended broader agenda, identify allies, stories to work on with them, 'key to doors', best doors to push in time available. Food agenda to cover seafood where issues are the same (sustainable production, who benefits). Nourish Scotland's work on food index and atlas for Scotland relate. Good Food Nation policy suggests a new Food Commission so that would be one obvious target.

Deer – Major contributors to Land reform, woodlands. By promoting ideas to RACCE last year, TF have secured Scottish intention to see improvements in deer management by 2016. Great if this TF is part of cross-cutting TFs land use/management/reform process in LINK.

Economics – Needs to identify what is do-able within TF resources, including pressing for improved performance framework, designing LINK manifesto asks, running workshop for members in Feb to look at issues to enhance arguments about environment and economics. Would like to tap resources in universities, courses and departments for discussion time. Phoebe Cochrane could work with TFs around the issue of the link between economic and social justice. Ran fringe at Green Party sharing platform with Oxfam, securing John Swinney, and getting good attendance and many interested observers. Question: should we vision what a sustainable and buoyant future of the Scottish economy looks like, with rewilding, good land management and estate practice, positive woodland and other land uses, to help our case, and what would be the economics of that? Candidate for DPF funds?

Freshwater – Plans as outlined in paper circulated (the Network Plan 2015/16); and thanks to Tom Leatherland for stepping into the vacancy created when Lisa Webb left RSPB.

Governance – As per Network Plan; legal subgroup work very much a social justice agenda.

Hilltracks – Notes LR proposals that Government should step in where landowners do unsustainable things and sees a need to test these fine words. However, the proposal show signs that LINK's work on the Reg Reform Bill influenced SG and SNH thinking.

Meeting noted that 'SEG' has been dropped from various places and titles since the ministerial reshuffle, test new 1st M statements on SD, seek a meeting.

Land – Plans to be developed; LINK's December workshop will inform. (Meeting noted a separate radical land reform group was to launch in Scotland)

Landscape – Landscape and energy statement in its final form being signed off by the TF and due to circulate to LINK. Focus of TF is to get government commitment to a landscape charter and forum, for party manifestos if not happened beforehand.

Marine – Ahead in terms of topics of local democracy, env/soc justice (sustainable fishing, voice in planning); plan an event for community and other stakeholders on MPAs in Feb 2016 (rural and

coastal community integration). Want to look at devolution of Crown Estate (meeting noted some complexity here and need to watch revenue/spend side of proposals emerging).

Planning – Well overlapping with social justice by its focus now on equal rights of appeal (following up our TPRA campaign of 11 years ago).

Sustainable Land Use – LINK workshop in December will look at the next focus of this TF and aspects of the work of other relevant TFs. Opportunity there to influence next strategy to be laid before Parliament.

Wildlife Crime – Research paper and political commentary on status of enforcement in Scotland to be published by LINK soon (NB: likely February); the prep of these are believed to be influencing trends in decision making. The TF will consider future strategy after publication.

Wildlife Forum – Concern re keeping *Species Champions* initiative live with Members and MSPs, some discussion of arguable reputation risk to LINK and members, capacity the issue, funding sought to get officer to run it and chivvy when things need doing. State of Nature report by a subset of the NGOs involved in the TF (and counterparts across UK) very useful, pointing to trends in biodiversity – big declines; was useful in challenging SNH's rosier report to Holyrood on the state of things, which led to the WANE Act and use of first INN order. Next step is to survey what works/or not (email survey to members from Phillipa at RSPB, and information also tabled). On INNS, in WANE Act, Scotland was leading, UK supported the EU regs coming into force in January.

Woodland Forum - Will meet to consider appropriate plan of action. Meeting Bob Macintosh shortly.

AOB

Issues to profile via LINK's Friends of Scotsman slots – **Members please suggest to Andy Beryl will forward** zostera good news story, re Species Champions, to Rea. BBC article on SC was very good.

Urban seminar could be planned for Scottish Environment Week