



MINUTES OF LINK ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD IN JURYS INN, GLASGOW, 21 NOVEMBER 2016

PRESENT

MEMBERS - Helen Todd, Chair & Ramblers Scotland; Tim Ambrose, Treasurer & SWLG; Charles Dundas, Vice Chair and WTS; Sam Gardner, Trustee & WWFS; Craig Macadam, Trustee & Buglife; Eilidh Nicolson, NTS; Allan Bantick, Scottish Badgers

STAFF - Jen Anderson; Alice Walsh; Karen Paterson; Daphne Vlastari; Charlotte Hopkins

IN ATTENDANCE - Eleanor Harris, Species Champions Officer

WELCOME

Helen Todd opened the meeting at 10:50. The limited attendance meant the meeting was inquorate. Draft minutes would be circulated to the wider membership with a request for support for decisions made. Helen welcomed those members and staff attending.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Received from Susan Matthews (Cairngorms Campaign), Deborah Long (Plantlife Scotland), Paul Kirkland (BCS), Chrissie Valluri (SWLG).

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING ON 17 NOVEMBER 2015

The draft minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous year's discussions. The minutes were proposed by Craig Macadam, seconded by Tim Ambrose and supported by the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING

None were raised.

4. ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2016

Helen Todd introduced the report noting with surprise and pleasure how much the LINK network achieves in the course of a year. Tim Ambrose presented the accounts and observed that LINK seems to be a huge fount of action. Reminding members that the report and accounts covered the year to 31 March 2016, Tim noted the period had closed with a slightly higher deficit than anticipated, the main component being the absence of core funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, which had ceased the previous year.

Membership income had decreased, while LINK's salaries bill had increased. The £25,706 deficit in unrestricted funds was partly offset by a £6,776 surplus in restricted funds. There had been a swing of £44,636 over the financial year, which was not ideal, but reflected the reality of these tighter economic times. This left LINK with a figure of £244,129 in free reserves, somewhat less than the £250,000 which the Board preferred to carry. Tim reported that the rolling 5-year projection maintained by the Board showed costs increasing in future, which the Board would review in the months ahead. At this point, LINK was not wealthy and unless the network grew in size, or LINK could access new funding, there was no choice but to continue to eat into reserves. Tim thanked Karen Paterson for her superb financial administration. He commended the report and accounts to members.

There were no questions. The report and accounts were proposed by Craig Macadam and seconded by Charles Dundas.

5. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES & OFFICE BEARERS; APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDENT & HONORARY FELLOWS

Trustees:

Helen Todd drew members' attention to the proposals in the circulated paper 3 and to the table illustrating the status of trustees. In summary, she reported that no nominations had been received, all trustees due to stand down by rotation were willing and able to stand again and there were no vacancies. The Board's recommendation to re-elect Craig Macadam, Paul Walton and Charles Dundas was proposed by Eilidh Nicolson, seconded by Allan Bantick and supported by the meeting.

Helen thanked LINK's trustees for their work over the year, confirming that Mike Robinson, who had been a co-opted trustee over nine years, was standing down. She recorded formal thanks for Mike's valued input to Board discussions.

Office bearers:

Moving on to election of office bearers, Helen drew members' attention to the circulated recommendation, an outcome of Board discussion, to re-elect herself as Chair, Tim Ambrose as Treasurer and Charles Dundas as Vice Chair. This was proposed by Eilidh Nicolson, seconded by Craig Macadam and supported by the meeting.

Helen advised that the coming year would be her final year as Chair and that she intended to stand down in 2017. This would create a vacancy on the Board and she invited members to consider nominating at that point.

Helen reported that although LINK can co-opt trustees to harness particular expertise, gaps had not been identified. As things moved on, the Board would keep an eye on such need.

President:

Drawing members' attention to the circulated recommendation, Helen reminded members that the presidential role is normally a 3-year tenure, confirmed annually. She noted Joyce McMillan's tremendous work over the last year and the valuable experience which Joyce brought to her role as President. Joyce had moderated LINK's Hustings in May, supported development of thinking around Brexit, had addressed LINK's Sea Scotland Conference in June and had spoken at the fringe meeting LINK had run with Sustainability Hub at SNP's conference in October. The Board's recommendation that LINK re-appoint Joyce as President was proposed by Sam Gardner, seconded by Tim Ambrose, and supported by the meeting.

Honorary Fellows:

Helen outlined the Board's recommendation of four new fellowships, reminding members that fellowship is open to individuals who have made a significant contribution to LINK over a long period before retiring or leaving the network, as well as to individuals who share an interest and commitment to environmental issues and may be interested in supporting LINK's work. The Board's recommendations were for four individuals all of whom had expressed willing and would be honoured to be nominated. These were:

Sarah Boyack – A long-time champion of good environmental stewardship and sustainable approaches; Minister for Environment for part of first parliamentary term from 1999; sponsor of SE Week for a decade; lost seat as MSP in May 2016 elections. The Board had discussed the possibility of Sarah's possible future return to active political life and would anticipate that she would step back from fellowship during any active period in politics.

Mike Robinson – A long-time contributor to LINK, Mike had set up FORGE (now Scottish Environmental Fundraisers Forum) whilst with RSPB, and spent 9 years contributing to Board thinking around profile/marketing, funding and relationship- building.

Deborah Long – Deborah would leave Plantlife in December to start a new job based at Dundee University. Her engagement in LINK had been significant as Plantlife's rep for over a decade, as a board member between 2004 and 2014 including her term as Vice Chair and her four years as Chair. Deborah had convened LINK's wildlife work for many years, was co-convenor of Land Group and had represented LINK on stakeholder groups over that time.

Andy Myles – Andy's contribution to LINK's strategic political engagement and around legal-environmental matters extended from 1999 to his retirement in 2015, both as a member of RSPB's staff (working through LINK's then Scottish parliamentary group) and later as LINK's advocacy officer. Andy retained an informed and active interest in environmental issues.

The Board's recommendations to appoint all four as Fellows were proposed by Charles Dundas, seconded by Craig Macadam and supported by the meeting.

6. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL EXAMINERS

Tim Ambrose reminded the meeting that LINK was not required by law to have its accounts audited and had decided two years ago to opt for independent financial examination. Mike Crerar of Geoghegans had fulfilled this role for the last two years, preparing the accounts within format, for a modest fee, and meeting Tim and staff each year. Tim recommended that LINK continue to use the services of Mike Crerar of Geoghegans. This recommendation was proposed by Sam Gardner, seconded by Eilidh Nicolson and supported by the meeting.

7. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE YEAR 2017/18

Tim Ambrose spoke to the paper circulated.

In 2015 the Board had proposed a 3% rise for 2016/17 and had outlined a likely 5% rise for 2017/18. Subsequently, the Board had decided to set the rise for 2017/18 at 3% and to adjust the minimum subscription payable to £125, given current low inflation and the fact that LINK had not experienced an expected cut to its public funding for 2016/17. As a trustee of two of the very small LINK member bodies, Tim believed the Board's financial approach was appropriate and he recommended the Board's proposal to the membership.

Referring to the table in paper 4 Tim reminded members of LINK's banding system which related to member total income; he reported that the Board had considered whether the thresholds could or should be smoothed, but was aware that any smoothing was likely to result in some members paying less, LINK receiving less, and some members paying more.

The proposals for a rise of 3% in subscriptions and for a rise to £125 for those paying the minimum subscription were proposed by Sam Gardner, seconded by Charles Dundas and supported by the meeting.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None raised.

The meeting ended at 11:20.

Draft/LINK/29.11.16