

Note of discussion and action points LINK Network meeting held 4 May 2017, at the Quaker Meeting House, Edinburgh.

**Present:** Helen Todd (Chair, Hilltracks, RS), Aedán Smith (Planning, RSPB), Alison Connolly (SEFF, RSPB), Paul Walton (RSPB, Trustee, Brexit, Wildlife), Helen Zealley (Hon Fellow), John Mayhew (APRS), Emilie Devenport (marine policy & engagement officer), Phoebe Cochrane (sustainable economics policy officer), Jen Anderson (chief officer), Daphne Vlastari (advocacy officer), Lisa Webb (advocacy office administrator), Alice Walsh (development officer), Lloyd Austin (Governance Group, RSPB), Sarah Dolman (Marine Group, WDC), Suzanne Burgess (Buglife), Craig Macadam (Trustee, Wildlife, Buglife), Andy Riches (Scottish Badgers), Ellie Stirling (Scottish Badgers), Drennan Watson (Hon Fellow), Vicki Swales (Land, Food & Farming, RSPB), Beryl Leatherland (Trustee, Hilltracks, SWLG), Aoife Behan (Soil Assoc), Jenny Hume (APRS, Have you got the bottle campaign coordinator), Matthew Crighton (Economics, FoES), Roger Powell (SCRA), Calum Duncan (Marine, MCS). From lunchtime Mark Lazarovicz (Hon Fellow, Legal Strategy), Diarmid Hearn (NTS, Land, Deer), Catherine Pendreigh (WTS).

**Apologies:** Paul Kirkland (BC), Patrick Stirling-Aird (SRSG), Tom Dawson (SCAPE), Jenny Mollison (SAGS), Charles Strang (SCNP), Davie Black (Plantlife), Tom Leatherland (SWLG), Kathy Wormald (Froglife), BES, Bruce Wilson (SWT), Richard Benwell (WWT), Gill Perkins (BBCT), Angus Miller (SGF), Susan Matthews (CC), Sue Hamilton (PD), Steve Micklewright (TfL), Pete Ritchie (Nourish), Sarah Boyack, Simon Pepper, James Curran, Elizabeth Leighton (Honorary Fellows).

### **1. Brexit – Broad situation update. LINK, Environment Links UK, and Greener UK – progress and current thinking. Discussion on Focussing LINK effort to best effect.**

Lloyd outlined the range of themes the Governance Group works on for LINK various parliamentary and political engagement work, including elections, environmental justice, and Brexit. Both UK and Scottish Government are developing their positions. UK announced its White Paper for the Great repeal bill (a cut and paste from EU obligations), and SG published its position, Scotland's Place in Europe. There have been various joint ministerial council meetings and lots of politics. Alongside, both sides are preparing for 'the negotiations' which will be lots of parallel negotiations. Environmental NGOs are making contact with the EU negotiating side. The 'green 10' – FoE Europe, Birdlife, EEB et al, met with chief negotiator for the Commission. ENGOS are doing a lot of preparatory work under different banners. We are involved in Environment Links UK, and the Greener UK coalition (a subset of Green Alliance). These overlapping coalitions are working together trying to create a process where the work supports one another. GUK was initially WM focussed. It has now established a task group on how to deal with devolved countries, with representation from the 4 countries. The lead board member is Martin Harper (RSPB), and Lloyd and Daphne from Scottish LINK. The first meeting this week, should make good progress to join up all the different pillars working to engage with devolved issues and with the GUK Board. Will meet monthly, a week ahead of the GUK Board meetings, to advise them. In parallel individual ENGOS and groups of them are engaging with UK and SG. LINK has met SG Brexit Minister Mike Russell, as have individual members. Brexit comes up in all ministerial discussions. At UK level, there has been some contact, and with Defra at official level, (all now in purdah for the general elections), and some contact with the department for exiting the EU (Dexu), whose lead is Philip Ryecroft, late of SG agriculture dept. Lloyd will seek a meeting with him. In terms of NGO process, there is a complex bureaucracy to deal with it and talk of rationalising and clarifying.

Daphne recapped on LINK's [input](#); before the Referendum we issued our Challenge, and have since input to the Holyrood consultation. These forms the basis of our opinions as LINK. Since then we have developed an internal paper on fisheries, and a published position on [agriculture and rural land management](#), and input to consultations run by MEPs and in connection to ELIK, liaising on joint position ahead of Great Repeal Bill. There are many big unknowns and no clarity. There are wider procedural constitutional positions LINK is looking into, to be reflected in the position on the GR Bill.

Vicki noted that civil servants are being excluded from the processes so far, and have no idea of content. The agreed monthly meetings have not regularly happened, and when they do, relations are tense. Defra has series of working groups. An official letter is due to explain the processes for food and farming, fisheries, forestry and trade, environment and animal health. Lloyd added that while GUK and ELUK are aware of that, in terms of our engagement with SG, it is evident that the tense political standoff between the 4 governments feeds down to the officials, and equally there must be some discussions going on, and devolved governments are getting blamed for lack of progress. All are spinning lines about others being uncooperative. SG is in an awkward position about Indyref 2 and whether Scotland would go back into the EU, or whether the position has changed, to stay out of the Common Fisheries Policy, or whether Scotland is out for a while and then back in, or whether it stays out. With all this uncertainty officials are hidebound in terms of doing proper preparation, as it implies their masters have lost the argument. It affects their ability to discuss with stakeholders. They may be making contingency plans without much discussions. LINK is meeting Bridget Campbell and colleagues on 31 May. The LINK delegation includes reps of Land, Governance and Marine, and if **other policy groups would like to be part of it, get in touch**.

Lloyd, replying to Drennan's question about the interface between immigration, trade negotiations, CAP, and EU legislation, and wherein all this control will be devolved, replied that it essentially depends on what is in the GR Bill, how much and what is cut and pasted from existing EU regulations, what is done about amending the Scotland Act etc, and in relation to the budget for agriculture, whether or not any of the fabled savings from EU membership are allocated to it, or to the devolved countries and then what they do with it. All 4 governments agree to keep CAP payments going to 2020 come what may, the same schemes will run to then, and that time will be used to answer these bigger questions. In relation to the Directives, many are transposed to primary legislation, or in regulations. In response to the White Paper, we will say that their principles and purposes, which are not transposed into law, must be transferred across for the legislation to be effective. When it comes to court, they are used to help interpret the legislation. The Bill will need to include agreements like REACH (chemicals). With devolved issues like planning, it may go into Scots law or be up to SG to do this as a Scottish Act following on from the GR Bill.

Drennan: with a very right wing WM government and a comparatively left wing SG, with the average income of Scottish farmers about £12k per year, is a rate no longer comfortable to grow food, so large areas of food production will be lost, and there must be common ground with NFUS.

Vicki: with future trade arrangements key for agriculture, for tariffs, movements, imports exports, all sort of scenarios are possible within that. Some will be attractive for consumers and not for producers or for environmental standards. There are second order questions on domestic policy in reaction, funding is crucial issue, the Treasury hold the purse strings. Scotland's share of CAP is currently 17%. If the Barnett formula is applied this would drop to 8%, assuming the starting point is £3.5bn. Then there is the question of where power sits and policy is drafted, about UK frameworks and UK issues. It is not desirable to have parts of the UK competing against each other. There may be other issues about standards on organic, or animal health, where it is not logical for decisions to be fully devolved. There will be debate. should be that all devolved governments discuss the future

at UK level, cooperative, but not top down. Decisions at devolved level within a logical UK framework. We come up against the issue of sensible decision making versus a power grab. We need the right powers in right place.

Lloyd: The ENGOS line is that devolution settlements should be fully respected, and there are areas where a form of common approach should be agreed, quasi federal, not imposed by WM, for those sensible technical reasons, agreed by cooperation, rather than an issue for reserved powers. That line is supportive of devolved administrations. Wales is expressing that view forcibly, more so than Scotland, because Wales accepts Brexit while Scotland does not. So Scotland is not being listened to, whereas Wales is.

Daphne noted that the EU guidelines for negotiations clearly stated the need for a level playing field. If we want to create a trade agreement with EU, the UK will have to bear this in mind. Also bear in mind cross-compliance between environmental regulations which refer to each other. Within this, countries can have different agriculture policies, eg subsidy regimes, but all have to meet the regulations.

Paul: with the so called re reserving power grab, we are facing enormous unknowns now, some feel that if the UK wishes to cut new deals, there will need to be a level playing field across the UK, and may feel that they have to re-reserve powers. There was some tension among NGOs on this, seeing the sense of a UK framework, and clear sensitivities of those UK NGOs who have relationships with the devolved administrations. It is great we have this level on NGO coordination, but it will be challenging to arrive at language which gives us a strong line, and is appropriate across the UK.

John asked how Greener UK relates to ELUK and the Green Alliance. GUK is a workstream of the GA, but not all GA members are members of it, as there are private sector members within the GA. The GUK includes major NGOs, 10 forming the Board and 20 more supporters. There is big overlap with Wildlife & Countryside Link. Two coalitions exist, and the GUK inviting the Links to nominate country reps to the advisory board is to bring them together.

What we are trying to achieve. Our positions are predicated on having better environment, in all the preambles, that the precautionary, polluter pays principles continue to permeate law, and on some, eg agriculture, there is more ambition about improvement. Also with biodiversity, and continuing to follow the EU action plan, and we want to make sure SG follows that. We have our great ideas of improvement, and political sense check. There are some barriers for us in messaging to SG and UK, hence our close links with UK colleagues. We will be doing a SWOT analysis of the scenarios and what LINK needs to be doing in the different cases, an internal memo for our planning, to be prepared in 3 to 4 years time.

Alison, representing SEFF, flagged the need for funding to resource aspirations, as currently much environmental work is EU funded from LIFE, structural funds, Leader. Other funding tends to focussed south, and if a Barnett formula is applied, Scotland will struggle. Daphne replied it is part of our messaging, and included in the Greener UK [manifesto](#). Lloyd added that Scottish NGOs may wish to contact their UK counterpart to encourage adding support if not already on the list of [supporting organisations](#).

Helen Zealley asked about preparation for protecting against eg, if UK develops trade links with the US. Daphne answered that we are limited in the extent we can be specific yet. We have interim security with transposition of law in the GR Bill. David Davis is talking about parallel standards, it is on our radar, and is why GUK has a working group on trade, and trying to get safeguards from WM.

Vicki: these could eventually count for nothing, if negotiations crash, and in the process will lose much on employment, environment regulations and more - nightmare scenarios.

Drennan: the background issue will be the right wing WM Gov and more left wing SG, still Keynesian. The deficit cutting, UK approach will dominate. With the future so uncertain, how to behave in the face of it? A recent paper [Policy making in uncertain environments](#) on the RSE website is worth reading.

Paul: trade is primary pathway for invasive species. The PM is committed to removing as many barriers to trade as possible. Currently, if SG does something not in line with Natural Directives we have inexpensive routes to take them to task. Without this there is costly judicial review, a real constraint in terms of moving society forward. Lloyd agreed, enforcement is vital and is why we are advocating different solutions. One part of the SNP argues for independence and staying in the EU, others don't like the Common Fisheries Policy and wants to stay out. We have to talk up enforcement. All governments are better at the rhetoric than delivery. How do we hold them to account? At the moment it includes the European Court of Justice processes and the Commission, so what else do we have? Going back to LINK's [Governance Matters](#) paper, and its 4 pillars of legislative, executive, judicial, and civic. There are ways of holding the executive to account: the court of public opinion, Parliamentary scrutiny, the judicial pillar, where LINK's legal governance subgroup (Lloyd and Mary Church mainly from the membership) are working on Protected Expenses Orders, implementing Aarhus, for an environmental rights centre, and campaigning work on environmental courts, trying to enhance the domestic provisions of the judicial pillar to hold SG to account. In the long term it is important that if and when EU accountability disappears, we need to up the ante on legal governance. Parliamentary scrutiny and campaigning needs to continue, but law has the bite. Beryl observed that the French and German elections will influence matters also.

Daphne explained how we were dealing with the WM elections. Key points that all the issues we raised in the earlier Brexit discussions are covered in the LINK's 2 page [manifesto](#) (to be published the week following this meeting) with asks for commitment to

1. Incorporate existing standards of EU environmental protection and core EU principles of environmental protection into domestic law.
2. Build on existing EU environmental protections and ensure that all policies contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals – Scotland's FM has said she will align the NPF with the SDGs.
3. Commit to adopting robust national processes for implementing UK international commitments.
4. Support an inclusive and transparent process for negotiating the UK and Scotland's future relationship with the EU
5. Safeguard future funding for environmental research and nature conservation projects.

This has been sent to key parties in Scotland, asking for these to be taken account of in preparing their manifestos, with positive responses from Lib Dems, Greens and Conservatives. No response yet from SNP or Labour. We are setting up calls and liaising with journalists, also sending to some key contacts and stakeholders in Scotland, to raise awareness. **Members should all feel free to use it in election work.** The Governance Group took a decision not to have a hustings as environmental policy is devolved, so discussion would likely lapse into independence, unhelpful, and people are busy.

Aedán asked if we are thinking of wider public awareness raising about our asks, and concerns about Brexit, something like a Referendum Challenge approach? This is what we are asking of the parties. In terms of public engagement we are bound by the UK Lobbying act. There was a decision to stay

away from regulated activities as LINK, so it will be published neutrally with a press release. In the past we had scorecards, which would put us in the regulated category. The guidance is very broad, covers anything that communicates with the general public that could be inferred by a reasonable person as implying support or disagreement with one party or another against others, encouraging a vote one way or another. If doing this requires monitoring of expenditure and registration with the Electoral Commission (£1k). Were LINK to register every member would be seen as doing the same. Most have decided not to register. The exception is FoE EW&NI, and Greenpeace which is not a charity, so has different rules. Regulatory activity kicks in a year before the election. The legislation is absurd. It covers communications with the public, so if people have signed up to hearing your opinion (via memberships), that is different, but the boundaries are not tested.

Given the difficulties of making a big noise around the election, the issues continue. GUK is not the best label to influence discussions in Scotland. How do we make a noise from Scottish perspective about hopes and fears? Daphne replied that our manifesto does that, and also meetings with MSPs, relationships with academics, and have participated in the report of wider civic society on how Brexit could impact on Human Rights, and brought to attention of Mike Russell. In terms of public engagement, we are waiting to see how things crystallise, get more clarity about what can be influenced by SG, eg if the Statutory Instruments have to be drafted, that is the point we would be looking at getting public facing joint letters. There is also the EEB conference as a big platform to raise concerns. If there any **further ideas that have not been discussed, please flag up for consideration by the Brexit subgroup or Governance Group**. Aedan is concerned by the fact that environment is not up there with a high profile. Paul asked if there is scope for a well-timed essay from LINK that lays out for us all, in public accessibly form, these concerns without tying our hands? This is what we are trying for in getting publicity for the manifesto. Can consider a joint letter to FM, and conference. **There will be a televised Scottish [national debate](#) on 24 May, where people can attend and ask questions about the environment.**

It was agreed that further thought is needed after the election, about who we are trying to reach, and what outcomes we want; potentially a long form thinkpiece with a shorter more publicly focussed article.

Vicki raised discussions at the Land Reform and Land Use Subgroup meeting on Brexit, about doing something that is inspirational about the environment to put down a marker from LINK, and why it matters, the challenges the environment will face, and the benefits of it.

Drennan thought it was an interesting idea, with 3 parts to it; the sheer complexity of mechanisms. impacts for the environment and what would LINK be trying to achieve. By informing people it improves the quality of the dialogue. It wastes time if people don't understand the issues. Improving the dialogue increases the status of the organisation that does it. There are masses of people who don't understand what is at stake. We should tell it as a story to get it across.

**Action: how to get the message across better to the public to be considered by the Brexit subgroup.**

Daphne has participated in conferences, (with normal people!), and we should continue to do that, potential conference with RSE on biodiversity. When it comes to mobilisation, must recognise the limits of LINK, it is up to members to do that. There will be e-actions run by different members on the GR Bill. Varieties on a theme. It was half prepared before the election, now postponed until afterwards. The RSPB one has 4 versions for the different countries. That will be one element of

public engagement. Where can LINK provide the greatest added value. We are in touch with new think tank, Scottish Centre for EU Relations Institute too.

In terms of WM manifesto, was there any work going on for June to share?

Sarah explained that on fisheries, marine protection the situation was complicated because the SNP position is messy. The Inshore Fisheries Bill is kicked into long grass, with thinking more broadly on fisheries now. They want to be in the EU and out of CFP, having cake and eating it. Question of how to frame a WM Act for MPAs. MCS's messaging sidesteps the constitutional issues and encourages a 4 country approach to solving the issues - act like grown-ups.

The GUK's 4 pillars are climate and energy, fisheries and marine, farming and land use, and environment and wildlife laws. Its board and various groups are looking at the cross-cutting. SNP could accuse us of not putting pressure on the UK Government, so it is good to demonstrate we are.

Drennan asked about NGO pressure on the other negotiating side of Brexit. Lloyd replied that those that have Europe wide networks are liaising and working with their partners in various ways. EEB is liaising too, and Lloyd is standing in for the UK rep for the June meeting. On fisheries, SNP and Conservative politicians are in cloud cuckoo land, there is no other non EU country involved that have the advantage. You don't need to be in our out of the EU or CFP, as a third party you have to live with the reality.

Can we do more to raise the profile of this as its difficult for individual NGOs to do it? Sarah agreed we should be putting out clear messages. The Marine Group meeting in May will consider further. Calum gave evidence to the Rural Economy Cttee and was at a Brexit breakfast, and reported astonishing ignorance. We are trying to influence through academics. Hopefully the Standing Council on Europe will have something soon. Drennan noted the SFF are a self-referencing organisation, we need to dispel public myths. The reasons SNP has adopted its position is because of the public angle. We are where we are because of greed, this is a tragedy of the commons. Fergus Ewing will not challenge them. We have been offered contact with BBC investigative journalists, may be merit in planting ideas.

**Action: Marine Group**

Paul asked if SEFF had figures or estimates on scale or relative scale of funds that are at risk. Vicki noted that RSPB had commissioned some UK work to find out how much it would cost to deliver biodiversity work in future. There is a feeling is that SNH is shrinking, expecting ENGOs to fill the gap, even while cutting their funding.

**Action: SEFF to take forward work on costings.**

Helen thanked everyone for their contributions, particularly the Governance Group. anyone wants to join them, isSW welcome.

EGM took place (minuted separately) followed by lunch.

## **2. LINK Honorary Fellows.**

Drennan Watson (LINK's founding chair) set the context of where LINK had started from. He recently came across letter he had written as chair of NEMT, to the recreational and wildlife groups that had come together on the Lurcher's Gully ski case, after the Reporter came out against the development. The eNGOs had cooperated very well, it was a stupid development in a stupid place, but all the agencies were for it. The eNGOs turned up with world leading experts, which was a shock to government. The eNGOs were surprised at themselves, and decided to get together to see what else

they could do together. Drennan was not an ecologist, he worked in agriculture, on non-coercive change, whereas environmentalists knew lots about ecology and nothing about people management.

In those days getting to a Minister in the Scottish office was hard, and could be lonely for those who did. David Minns, at RSPB said he needed some soldiers around him. People in government now knew they had to listen. Drennan did not come to campaign, he ran a bus. As chair he would say what it was the organisations had in common, and let the members get on with it. Pre devolution it was a mess. Lord James Douglas Hamilton was the first they met, he had not much ability and read out his briefings. Lord Sanderson who followed was 19<sup>th</sup> century throwback, stating the sporting estate is the backbone of the highland economy. Devolution was a mini-Brexit, less complex, same issues. Malcolm Rifkind was different, saw us, he wanted to know more, that was a big change, and the start of regular meetings. You need to make them listen. Dialogue is great, but is also a power struggle, you need to keep the fencepost handy to threaten them with. Now the range of issues LINK is working on is great, no one organisation could deal with it. Civil servant relationships – they ask how they can manage ministers if the NGOs are not doing their job. A case study, LINK's 3 witches (at the time of transposition of the Water Framework Directive) charmed the MSPs, invented different ways of engaging ministers, eg taking them out to see the Insh Marshes. That was an important influence in getting better legislation. So do not be daunted, remember what we have achieved. Progress is difficult to measure, is quite subtle.

Helen Zealley came into LINK about 2010, with some understanding of its history, and could not believe how effective it was at pulling together sometimes disparate voices; and such a positive relationship with SG, found it very impressive, got to know amazing people, admire you still being at it, at this challenging time, and is here to help where she can.

Mark Lazarovicz was an MP until 2015, and returned to work as a lawyer. He commented on Drennan's point on Ministers, that an NGO putting forward the case powerfully is much more effective than being hesitant or mealy mouthed. He is involved in the Legal Governance Subgroup, that is going forward with proposal for the environmental rights centre. Events which were discussed this morning underline the importance of it.

Helen reminded members that LINK has 22 Honorary Fellows, there are short biographies on the website, some of them might be able to help the groups in their work, they cover a huge range of bases.

### **3. EEB conference and LINK 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations.**

Daphne updated the meeting. The EEB is the biggest ENGO platform in Europe with over 100 members not just from the EU countries, it has a lot of clout in Brussels. LINK is the only Scottish organisation in it. EEB decided to take its annual conference around EU cities and we are the second country to do it, on 6 Nov 2017. The main venue will be Dynamic Earth, it will involve 250-300 people, and its free to attend. LINK will get visibility throughout the agenda, it is an opportunity to reach out to different stakeholders, progressive business etc, we are hopeful of some senior Government R Cunningham a definite, and possible the FM. There will be high level discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals, a key issue for EEB, Scotland and the UK. Format will be high level presentations, Q&A, lunchbreak, then 3 parallel sessions on biodiversity and climate change, agriculture and farming, marine and fisheries. Idea is to have people from Scotland to showcase good work, tapping into colleagues across the UK, and alert our EU partners on the devolved nature. Reporting back from those sessions will follow, then final panel with non-political inspirational

figures from across the EU giving views and thoughts. This is a big piece of work for us, we're trying to make it a success. Invitations will go to members in early summer. Also tied into it is the 30th birthday celebrations evening of 7 November, reception and ceilidh, also planning to make a video capturing the essence of where we have got to. There could be scope to do more. A lot of EEB members will still be there. Drennan suggested that we should also ask our partners what it is they might want us to do, what Scotland can do to help others, which is being covered by the joint development of the programme with EEB secretariat. Matthew suggested inviting Oxfam to talk about doughnut economics linking to the SDG goals.

Vicki reflected on how to frame these discussions, with the elephant of Brexit in the room. How we stay on the right side of the politics of it. This has been discussed, eg we would be looking at how to green agriculture across the EU. There will be moderators for discussions, moderator volunteers or suggestions are welcome. On specific case of CAP, EEB is hoping the Commission would have some proposals before the conference, which can be aired. Will avoid discussion on Brexit, and providing clear briefing to speakers to avoid putting LINK or EEB in a tricky position. One day will be taken up by the EEB AGM. There will likely be a half day workshop on the Wednesday, depending on funding, normally just for EEB members, but can be widened. Topic will be mobilising member, looking into good examples, lessons and best practice. There will be a social cultural aspect. Andy Myles has offered his tour of Edinburgh. And also there will be a tour of the Parliament.

This year there will not be the usual Festive reception, will be a smaller LINK get together on 7 December, for Strategic Planning and AGM. Helen thanked all for putting in so much work which should be great for getting the environment on the stage. SG Environment Directorate have agreed to help fund it, and so has SNH, and we are trying other parts of government too. And hopefully a small list of businesses for supporting, and universities. SEFF may be able to help. Drennan suggested that we could have a badge, like a thistle, for helpers to identify themselves.

There is also the natural capital conference several weeks later which will be involving many members.

#### **4. Review LINK November 2016 aspirations, objectives and progress, identifying priorities for the next 9 months, integration needs, and members' capacity in relation.**

The last network meeting was Strategic Planning in November and members have seen the circulated papers on the reports and forward plans for the next year. Helen noted that with much going on with Brexit and EEB, to be aware of the capacity of staff and members in terms of aspirations.

**Planning Group;** planning reform, [responded](#) to the White paper, looking for better integration between planning and other parts of government, a top ask is enhanced profile for National Planning Framework to sit with the Marine Plan and Land Use Strategy as lead document for a sustainable future, sitting alongside the Economic strategy, reversing the polarity. Getting some pick up, RTPA is supportive of some aspects. We are pushing for better rights of appeal for communities. 10 years ago we didn't get there with Third Party Right of Appeal. It is equal rights of appeal this time which Planning Democracy is working on. We may see some progress if not quite all the way there. Draft Bill coming by end of 2017, might slip. Next 6 months about increasing the advocacy.

**Wildlife Subgroup;** Two key things are species champions, 92 MSPs now, and its time to make use of them. **Craig asked all the subgroups to consider how we can use them in advocacy. Also please let Craig and Lisa know if meeting MSPs for the record.** Are considering how to use them to release



more funds for biodiversity, so it goes on actual biodiversity, rather than people engagement. Next will start looking at biodiversity in the Climate Bill. Our [National Ecological Network](#) position paper has over 20 members signed up. The NEN is in the NPF3 and SBS as a key project, with virtually no progress. LINK was asked to provide the vision, so have done this now.

**Wildlife Crime:** both Scottish Badgers and RSPB invited to give evidence to the ECLLR Committee, on back of the LINK [reports](#). The Committee has taken on board the contents. Outcome is that Police Scotland should find out why there is such a big discrepancy between reportage. In last 3 weeks there has been developments on raptor crime, the Crown Prosecution Service has dropped plans to prosecute 3 cases.

**Land Group** does not have a work programme in itself, oversees coordination of 3 subgroups. Wildlife, Food & Farming and Land Reform & Land Use. F&F has signed off a paper about the future of rural support in Scotland, essentially a Brexit think piece, circulated now, and out there with a lot of papers from others. Next, thanks to funding from LINK DPF, SLE (where there is much common ground on positions) and individual member bodies the plan is for a Chatham House roundtable with experts, academics, do some analysis of the papers beforehand to identify common ground and conflicts, a facilitated discussion and a report, with aim of influencing government policies. Quite a lot of work, some members also involved in the Scottish Food Coalition and the Good Food Nation Bill, which looks like it will be delayed. Meeting ahead of the SFC with Fergus Ewing, date to be fixed.

Land reform & Land use, is continuing to follow land reform, LUS and landscape. Landscape is the least concrete element. On LUS trying to do work around the regional pilots, continuing to press for them as a good idea, and look at what it might look like, some consultations with local authorities. There is not a lot of political appetite for it, or government funding for it. Land Reform, wanting to meet commissioners to discuss their remit, and they do see the LUS as part of their remit, rights and responsibilities (to which we have submitted a [response](#)). Drennan flagged the Scottish Rural Colleges [strategy document](#) now out. They are responsible for the education of farmers, in it there is a policy that education should be industry led. This has dangers which have consistently come up, eg in forestry, where a lot of re-education was needed. If left to farmers we will end up with generations of mis-education. It is a good time to get in.

**Action: Vicki to check out the consultation with a view to brief comment.**

**Marine**, and aquaculture. Charlotte Hopkin has moved on since March, Emilie Devenport is doing a great job. Hoping to eke out posst until November, trying for more funding to keep it going. Lots on the agenda, getting to be a busier ecosystem on marine, lot of previous incumbents in the job are agitating in other ways. Next tranche of MPAs is delayed by Brexit. Will be customised campaign of #Don't take the P for it. We are now in a different situation, with pushback from industry for the first tranche, and now have Fergus Ewing as minister, who does not want conservation to interfere with business – a great challenge. May be silver lining, with Loch Carron incident which may bring things to a head so Marine Scotland and LINK are not pushing against each other. Waiting to hear if the next 4 sites will be announced this year. Will include some big areas. Will be EU wide discussions about the big offshore sites, most of our work there is finished, having got these into the public domain, uniquely in EU, so we could respond, and Scotland is probably leading the way. Marine planning, have the *Living with the Seas* document we want to use. The Clyde Forum has the green light to proceed with its plans, and will be making a progressive case for marine planning, making sure we get ecosystem enhancement. Had to make the case for some issues to take place within the context of the forum. Links shopfront, working with MASTS, universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen, organising the Sea Scotland conference, last year's was a fantastic success. Other work has been

developing a post Brexit vision. A good paper developing not yet public, picking up on earlier conversations, this could help, what sustainable fishing should look like, irrespective of constitutional arrangements. Inshore fishing bill is particularly crucial because post Brexit the UN convention on the Law of the Sea does not apply to inshore waters. It is long past being needed to properly manage inshore waters, so need to keep the pressure on it. Also been doing member led work on aquaculture on inappropriate fish farms, case based. Dawn Purchase MCS is leading the subgroup, refresh concerns on aquaculture.

Planning reform is relevant to aquaculture. **Action: Dawn and Aedan to liaise.**

**Landscape** as in the plan update. Not lost sight of the Scottish landscape charter, a long way off the political agenda. Wild land area, recent SNH consultation which some members responded to. SNH has been working on an upland vision, not heard much about that for some time. We did respond, ball back in SNH's court, not sure what will happen. Been discussion how we might use the landscape and energy paper. SNH workshop on local landscape designations 1 August.

**Governance Group:** all covered earlier.

**Economics Group:** significant news is end of funding for Phoebe's post, not supported by any dedicated staff from now on, so up to the participating orgs to get on with it. Session run recently on working with business for LINK as a whole to see what lessons there were, note to come. Elements will continue that are being done by member bodies, eg SWT work on natural capital and all the issues around valuing nature and biodiversity; FoES and just transition and investment, divestment, and pension funds, WWF and RSPB's work. Group will try to have a look at current consultations relating to economics, coordinating some via SCCS, climate change plan, local heat, onshore wind and regulation of private rented housing. There is much going on. Will be putting in a [response on City Deals](#). Group would like to secure funding for the work that can only be done centrally; Circular economy bill, continuing work around the National Performance Framework and relationship with SDGs revision of outcomes, the Investment Gap to create a sustainable economy, and interested in promoting the environmental narrative on the economy, includes the GDP question, and whether we want it to grow or not.

**Hilltracks** subgroup, have got some funding for a consultant to work 5 hours a week. Fantastic applications. Mel Nicholl will be starting on 8 May. To continue monitoring and building the case for why prior notification is not doing the job. Can be linked to sustainable land use, public interest.

**Deer** subgroup: submit evidence, got an agreed form of words.

**Unconventional Fossil Fuels:** a response to the *Talking Fracking* consultation is going round members for sign up.

**Social Justice:** not been taking forward as a specific group, we agreed to put together a pledge, sent to SG, not heard back. Fairer Scotland action plan has stalled, as lots of measures needed new funding. Need to make the links clearly in our other work.

SEFF and Media Forum. SEFF is meeting quarterly, and Media Forum may be meeting in the summer.

**Climate** was raised as an issue we needed to do more on in November, various discussion on the hows of it, no capacity within staff, so Board agreed funding to contract Phoebe Cochrane to help coordinate LINK's work on the Bill. Workshop on 22 June where representation from Groups and Subgroups will be core participants. At that point will present the combined strands, and agree how to develop it. SCCS asks are quite sector focussed. If LINK can do some cross-cutting work on this,

useful, with the climate consensus statement as the starting point. Biodiversity as a theme, and the targets happening on sectoral level, big emphasis on the voluntary approach, we could be harder hitting than is intended, possibly for other sectors too. LINK focus will be on what SCCS is not covering.

Drennan: [RSH report](#) on how climate change has already affected gardening. Gardening is a huge audience. If there is more awareness of the downsides a whole horde of people can come onside.

Government consultation on **energy strategy** is out. Is there capacity to respond as LINK? Not much.

**Intensification of grouse moor management.** Grouse pellets are full of pesticides, getting rid of hill farmers and sheep, now applying more pesticides to sheep via contract shepherd. Unsupervised untrained staff, pops up anywhere. RSPB are working on it, picked up in licensing discussions, and the Upland strategy, looking at these issues in the round. Now don't know how these will be pursued. Massive muirburns, conflicts with natural flood management. Wildlife Crime subgroup come across in terms of killing of raptors. Big problem too in agriculture, with pesticides sold on commission basis, and with Brexit, we rely on EU to test pesticides safety, no plan for doing this afterwards. Hilltracks will be trying to broaden out its issue too. Is a question of capacity. We will keep an eye on what SNH is doing.

**Funding ambition across policy areas and capacity in LINK staff team:** There are live applications for Marine and Economics posts but no certainty on funding. Without dedicated officers there will be more reliance on core staff, also for Species Champions since Eleanor Harris left in March. Living wage intern recruitment drew many good candidates. We are applying for core funding too, to increase capacity to support groups. Hilltracks have successfully raised funding to help its programme for 5 hours per week; and Legal Governance will be recruiting too.

## **AOB**

Buglife has its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Scotland this year.

Ramblers had organised a roundtable last week in Parliament, aimed at Andrew Thin, on the role of the Scottish Land Commission. On its strategic plan, the key word is productivity. From a Ramblers perspective recreation has an economic benefit. SLC is going round the country gathering ideas of what should be in their strategy to be laid before Parliament in September. A study shows the value of landscape to the tourism agenda. There is a big gap between the land managers and tourism businesses. Same situation on marine, studies on land, studies at sea, yet fishermen and farmers are the most important people. Marine recreation is worth over 3bn. The view is they can have all the benefits anyway on the back of the damaging industries. Drennan flagged the damage to the landscape happening, the scale of change is huge, desertion of the Angus Glens a case in point. Mark thought there are some good people on the SLC, and focus on trying to get in there at an early stage. A letter will be going there soon from the Land Group.

AW 10 May 2017.