

## **LINK Planning Group meeting note, 14 September 2018 at the WTS office, Edinburgh.**

Attending: Aedán Smith (RSPB) Clare Symonds (PD), Sue Hamilton (PF), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG), Arina Nagy-Vizitiu (WTS), Mary Church (FoES), Fergus Boden (FoES), John Mayhew (APRS), Thom Quinn (RSPB), by phone, Daphne Vlastari (LINK AM), Alice Walsh (LINK DO).

Apologies: Charles Strang, Gus Jones, Bruce Wilson, Diarmid Hearn.

### **1. The Planning Bill**

Several members were at the Stage 2 debate the previous Wednesday. Stage 2 is allocated to the end of October. Process was good, fast and well prepared for rather than rushed. Govt was defeated on several fronts. Most of our amendments are progressing well. Clare has the full list and will circulate by dropbox. **Action: Clare has done this.**

Headlines – there is a purpose for the planning system now, will be about delivering sustainable development (rather than sustainable economic growth) and tied to national outcomes. These general purposes have limited traction, but set the tone, so its positive, and partly due to discussions with the SPAD and consensus with others such as RTPI. NPF discussions were a step in the right direction. There will have to be approval by Parliament. Has been pressure on Govt from across the spectrum so compromise was made; MSPs want to be able to amend and approve the NPF; there will that opportunity (90 days) for input and discussion. Other amendments we put in on repeat applications, review of SDPs back to 5 years from 10, and fees raised. Discussion followed on why we are winning, what has led to it. Short answer is minority government, a great committee dealing with the bill and key allies the Greens are on top of it. Groundwork has paid off, in this case. Some changes now to the Committee members.

Rumours that bill may be dropped as its going in the wrong direction for the industry, though feeling was this is unlikely. It is now very complicated with 300 amendments, results could be a very mixed bag and no strategic direction.

**Tasks ahead:** to counter the pushback from industry, nothing coordinated is emerging. In terms of Bills it is still quite low profile. Our messaging: that what started as a bad bill is now getting better, well done to Govt for collaboratively working with the committee.

Also discuss the e-action.

**Action: working session to go through amendments and agree strategy for next phase, to build on the initial success, Campaign meeting 2.00 pm 25 September, now at LINK office.**

**Reinstate the weekly planning bill team calls on Mondays at 2.00.**

PD asked by Monica Lennon to raise the profile of ERA; plan a demo outside Parliament 26 September timed Committee's discussion of ERA, best guess. Clare needs help with press. FoES can help. Clare to send details around the Group, all support welcome. **Action: Clare, Mary**

John asked if the Group's bill team can keep the rest informed with a summary after each Cttee session, to alert the wider network when support is needed. **Action: to be done each Wednesday pm during Stage 2.**

Discussion on how much to lobby on landscape issues. One amendment taken forward on brownfield sites for APRS. Agreed MSPs should be left to do the lobbying. Too much noise from us will encourage lobbying against. The renewables industry is less of a threat on NSAs now. JMT has an amendment on wild land.

Clare raised the Lib Dems position on ERA and how to handle them, thinks they need to be kept on board, have their own position, not supporting Andy Wightman's amendment. Alex Cole Hamilton and Willie Rennie not on board with ERA, stuck on the reasonableness issue, and local accountability. In terms of the Cttee it would not make much difference, but it may at Stage 3. Lab and Greens are fully on side. LDs and SNP are coming closer together on budget and Brexit. May sit out the vote. Meeting of Edinburgh West LDs on 25<sup>th</sup>, which Beryl will attend, and raise ERA there. There is a chance an amendment at Stage 3 with the reasonableness test would be supported by Govt, but its convoluted. We need to consider the back up position if the LD one falls. Also G Simpson's call in amendment. Can be made better so that Govt has to explain themselves better? Would that calm down LD fears? ERA strengthens local democracy. **Action: Daphne to send Beryl some argument for the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup>. We should ask Alex CH for another meeting. Speak to Liam McArthur**

Conservatives are split on ERA. They were meant to have a meeting to discuss it and did not agree. G Simpson is onside. Clare will try for a meeting with Ruth Davison. It was a Local Govt manifesto commitment, case for limited right of appeal, local democracy, about local communities. We have met their head of policy who knows our views.

**Fringe event at SNP conference?** 7-9 October. There is a motion going to conference on ERA which may get through (*nb it did not*). Some SNP councillors are in favour. Agreed we should pursue an event on a range of issues in the planning bill if the time slot and venue are right. Tom will pursue. DPF bid to be made to fund it, if so. Daphne will contact Joyce to ask if she would be available to chair it. Sound out Lesley Riddoch as panellist, if onside, and invite MSP in favour of ERA, someone to speak about the positives of the bill. Preliminary work needed to consult with organisers of the conference. Daphne and Thom to talk further.

We should contact the 2 new members of the Cttee, offer to meet, send the updated briefing. There have been some members outwith the cttee interested, Sandra White, kingfisher species champion. Tom can meet her on planning issues.

Remember that SNP were in favour of ERA 10 years ago and other parties were against it.

## **2. LINK Alternative planning conference.**

This is to look at what kind of planning system do we want. We have now developed relationships with plenty of sectors as a result of the prep for this Bill. There is scope for a launch of a LNK manifesto. Opportunity to take stock beyond the Planning Bill, and to link with issues of land reform beyond the central belt. Would it be a PD or LINK initiative. PD are keen to do something, but cannot go it alone. The Marine Group has done a lot to push forward its agenda through the Sea Scotland conferences. Action: for discussion at a future meeting of the Group when Stage 2 is finished.

**Action: doodle for meeting for November.**

## **3. Member updates:**

FoES: Emilia Hanna and James Curran writing to Roseanna Cunningham about air quality issues. There is an amendment in the bill, about not granting planning permission in air quality management zones.

On fracking, Ineos has not appealed the Judicial Review decision, good news. It is setting itself up as a supplier of utilities for new businesses its attracting to Grangemouth, eg biotech companies. It has a notification for a new refinery after 2026. Latter is on FoES radar, a Just Transition issue, a key priority for FoES. Fracking process is not finished, an SEA consultation will start end September for 8

weeks. Foes will still push for legislation. Its not over. Hard to gain traction for a legislative ban, hope to draw a line on it early next year. Just Transition Commission stakeholder workshop held yesterday, not much industry in the room, but good discussions. Jim Skea will head it. It needs to have overseeing of the justice element while decarbonising; is definitely relevant to planning.

RSPB also interested in Grangemouth.

Beryl: Hilltracks report is ready, have changed the ask, took forestry out of it for various reasons, including Confor's opposition. First report, named and shamed. This one focuses on a better standard of tracks for those that need to be there. How effective the system has been and the problems with it since 2014. Andy Wightman's amendment to bring them into the planning system. No recommendations in the report this time, as last time Govt went for the easiest option. Will pursue at stage 3. Also a General Permitted Developments review coming up. And if necessary will persist through that. PR being finalised today for launch on Tuesday. Met with all allies and opponents.

Human Rights Advisory Group. FoES has been going to that reference group, has a specific roundtable on environmental rights. One of the recommendations is to establish a Scottish bill of rights, with the right to a clean and healthy environment, special rapporteur John Knox, framework principles really well worked out. Draft recs coming in Oct, to go to the FM by 3 November. Could be huge for LINK.

PD flagged trees being cut down at a site, raised with them by the local community. WTS has responded to the planning application notice, and not heard anything. TPO amendments are in the planning bill, from Edinburgh Council.

APRS: Deposit Return Scheme consultation is out. Guide on APRS website to do it quickly and easily, before 25 September. Doing a stunt on 20<sup>th</sup> with gulls handing in postcards. John will be attending the Europarc conference, where Roseanna Cunningham will speaking. Not allowed to put DRS literature in the packs. Greenbelts also an issue. John on the external reference group for the SGovt Environmental Strategy for Scotland, along with several other members.

LINK position is a Strategy is not enough, we need an Act, for legal underpinning of EU environmental principles, addressing the governance gap, and for policy goals for the environment, having a strategy that is regularly updated, scrutinised and built to deliver. Referencing Mary's point on the human rights angle, how much it makes sense to be pushing for it. How what we want works in tandem for a clean and healthy environment. Stakeholder meeting ahead with the government.

Interested in how the strategy might link into the NPF. Daphne is looking at how to link them all up. One of the key asks has been around an NEN. Is an amendment in the Planning Bill. A whole of Govt approach, and a rolling programme of actions. How to support that.

WTS. TPOs, and otherwise the Scottish Forestry Strategy.

RSPB – Coull links, called in, probably going to enquiry next year. Passed it to the DPA. David Liddle is the reporter. Likely to be a PLI.

LINK's Environment Campaign. Will be very exciting. Fight for Scotland's Nature.

Work programme. Planning Bill and beyond. Conference for discussion at next full meeting.

E action: for 25<sup>th</sup> September meeting.

At yesterday's land group meeting NEN was discussed, and suggestion that we should address the NEN issues in planning. Daphne and Dilraj will create an advocacy plan around the NEN as part of the next NPF. Strategic thinking for the two groups and parcel up the work.