## **Meeting Notes- Wildlife Group meeting 9th December (15:00pm-17:00pm) via Zoom**

**Attendees-** Craig Macadam (Buglife), Kathy Wormald (Froglife), Chris Corrigan (Butterfly Conservation), Isobel Mercer (RSPB), Chris Charlton (SWBG), Arina Russell (Woodland Trust), Eve Keepax (KSB), Gus Jones (BSCG), Allan Bantick (Scottish Badgers), Beryl Leatherland (SWLG), Juliet Caldwell (LINK), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Deborah Long (LINK), Tony Gent (ARC Trust), Helen Taylor (RZSS), Naima Todd (Woodland Trust), Alistair Whyte (Plantlife)

**Apologies –** Paul Walton (RSPB), Sarah Dolman (WDC)

**Chaired by -** Craig Macadam

**Summary of actions from previous 28th October meeting**

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| **Action No.** | **Action** | **To be actioned by** | **Status** |
| **1.** | Consultant suggestions for Delivering the Goods report | WG Members | Complete |
| **2.** | RSPB to submit blog following Nature Networks launch | Isobel Mercer | Complete |
| **3.** | Species Champions Zoom Roundtable date in the diary | Juliet and Craig | Complete |
| **4.** | Species Champions host members to check their current list of species is up to date | Juliet | Complete |

1. **General Updates**

* **Acceptance of Previous Minutes & Review of Actions**

Previous meeting minutes accepted, and actions updated.

* **Meetings Attended**
* Arina – Met with Claudia Beamish to discuss Native Woodland Creation Targets. Call for Native Woodland Creation Targets in line with the Nature Recovery plan from RSPB. Trying to reach out to various MSPs, particularly those on the relevant committees ahead of the climate change plan being published in the next few weeks. Claudia is very sympathetic to this. WT trying to get her to do a member’s business debate but she doesn’t have capacity but is very interested in ensuring we increase our targets. WT talks about carbon capturing and natural regeneration etc. The goal is to get her to do a debate. However, WT still in the process of finding an MSP to do this before the next election. In the process of arranging meeting with Colin Smyth, Angus Macdonald etc.
* Bruce – SWT held a Champions for Change event with NFUS in parliament. Trying to build towards getting the Government to signal its intentions with future subsidy.
* Isobel – RSPB held a webinar in parliament on peatland restoration & native woodland. This was an opportunity for scientists to showcase new research on carbon benefits of native woodlands – good turnout.
* Helen – attended a NatureScot run event about benefits of beavers. Designed to bring people together who are working with beavers in Scotland and people who want to bring beavers onto their land. Trying to figure out how to move forward on translocation of beavers within range in Scotland. Bruce asked how much discussion there was of regional land use partnerships or future agri-envrionment schemes within that. Helen said there wasn’t much or any representation from NFUS on that. NatureScot have now got sub working groups around Beavers etc. and there are NFUS representatives on some of these groups but not the one she attended.
* **LINK Website – Wildlife Group Page**
* The Nature Network banner will come down from the main page on our website next year. You can still follow the film link via the [campaign section](https://www.scotlink.org/link-campaigns/nature-networks-matter/)

1. **Workplan review**

* The group worked on refining the work plan for the group. 3 main priorities for WG - UK Target work (COP15), the biodiversity strategy and Species Champions, however we will still need to react to things that come up during the year, eg the Environment Strategy and the SEA of the pathways to the outcomes (due early Jan/Feb).
  + 30x30 discussion
    - Isobel suggested we need to set out what 30x30 on land actually looks like in Scotland.
    - Craig suggested writing a briefing on this and Isobel suggested getting this out before elections.
    - WCL working on a briefing which will illustrate what 30x30 would look like in Scotland. This could be something we could also produce and publish before election.
    - Isobel could potentially work on 30x30 messaging. RSPB is developing it on a UK level but Isobel could tweak it for Scotland.
    - Chris Corrigan suggested [WCL’s document on 30x30](https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Link_30x30_paper_18%20November.pdf) has some transferable content. It is framed in the environment act but something we could potentially use.
    - Arina asked do we actually know how 30x30 applies to Scotland? The context is very different in Scotland and we might have to look at it in how much resources we have.
    - Craig - Advocacy on NN is being met with a resistance that we don’t want more designations. The conflict is if we do advocacy on 30x30 will this risk of conflict on the government?
    - Chris Corrigan - It is the same in England where Government are claiming 26% is protected, but this includes the hopeless NPs. 30 x 30 is a useful vehicle to press for improvements to poorly managed designated areas. Useful context for 30 x 30 - <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/05/20/eu-plans-protect-30-land-seas-2030-biodiversity/>
    - Isobel - We tried to run an analysis of SSSI condition inside and outside Scotland’s NPs but it’s really hard because the feature condition is not measured by unit so it wasn't that reliable (because the designated sites are partially inside and partially outside the parks)
  + Nature Networks
    - Craig suggested encouraging Planning & Land Use groups to use the film. We come from a wildlife point of view, however different groups might be able to use different messaging.
    - Bruce – highlighting our responsibilities if we are to keep pace with the EU biodiversity strategy.
    - Helen – Asked if there was more we can do with the NN video? Suggested pulling together a strategy and using other venues who can use the film. Upcoming news events where we can remind people of it.
    - Eve – Target a general public audience e.g. farming. Using particular calls to action and linked to something they can go and do or change that they can make.
  + Aichi reporting
    - Craig said we our outside that process and not in on the opportunities. The key thing is to get inside that process and drive the development for whatever comes next.
    - The final Scotland Aichi report comes out next week, where we will be scored 9/20 targets.
    - Is there any opportunity to link to other targets the government has, e.g. restoration of ecosystems for biodiversity alongside carbon targets. Co benefits with how we can achieve a better outcome for biodiversity by aligning with carbon reduction targets.
    - Helen suggested publishing some articles/blogs for the general public so they understand why we have both COP15 and COP26 and the basic information behind each conference. Using very simple infographics.
    - The ELUK group will be publishing a blog series on why COP15 is important and why we should be talking about it more – contributing to raising awareness of COPs.
  + INNS
    - Craig - Scotland isn’t doing anything.Comparing this with what is happening in England, who are pushing for a biosecurity inspectorate. The SG aren’t stepping up therefore the action is to put pressure on them to act.
    - Beryl suggested using FoS to highlights the profile of INNS – Paul or Craig to write?
    - Craig - Nature target for funding. When that comes out we have a response to it – us or SEFF to respond. We need to show what was indicated earlier on in the year and what is being put into that target/indicator.
  + Biodiversity
    - Isobel – Using climate and nature emergency language and continuing to add that message. We need to get the SG to declare a nature emergency. The Gov’s approach is that they are not on an equal footing. We need to try to get that framework of the declaration of targets and climate change plan mapped for the nature emergency.
    - Species Champions will be backing a nature emergency in the pledge they will sign in the new year.
  + Funding
    - Alistair suggested it would be good to do something for LINK to see how effective the Scottish biodiversity fund has been, how that has helped to meet biodiversity targets and why do we need to have a view on it.
    - Craig said there is increased funding for peatland restoration (£250 million over the next 10 years) however the Biodiversity Challenge Fund is tiny in comparison and agreed on an annual basis. We need a fund that can deliver for species over a longer period of time. Isobel suggested this is something the Green Recovery group can pick up. Kathy suggested via SEFF.
    - Arina suggested using the Delivering the Goods report as an example to reflect the biodiversity fund. Tying it in by stating there isn’t enough money and it’s on an annual basis etc. – we would deliver more goods if it was longer term.

1. **Update on biodiversity process** 
   1. **Post 2020 biodiversity delivery – Update from Paul Walton**

* Recent announcements on Werritty (grouse moors), Marine Protected Areas and (previously) on peatland funding will be accompanied soon (possibly next week) by final Scotland Aichi report, which will show Scotland scoring well on 9/20 targets. This is good relative to UK countries and rest of the world, but of course this is the Scottish Government scoring itself against very vague ‘means’ targets.
* A **High-Level Statement on Biodiversity** is expected next week from Cab Sec or FM. The scenario of SG claiming ‘leading status on biodiversity’ on the back the above reports/funding look likely. Future funding/priority restrictions for biodiversity based on ‘we are already doing well’ messaging seems a key risk for the sector.
* That is despite the State of Nature report that showed ongoing biodiversity loss – LINK seems to have a role in welcoming progressive moves but pointing out that these don’t yet represent the step change needed to reverse SoN findings.
* On Aichi we will have some specific disagreements, in particular T20 on funding, which was given an orange ‘moving in the right direction’ in the last draft interim assessment (which did not get published), as compared to the previous interim assessment which (helpfully) scored it a black moving away from target. LINK and the NS Scientific Advisory Committee pushed back on that - we know confidentially that NS came under pressure from SG to score T20 more positively. Overall, and despite the peatland funding commitments, the biodiversity funding situation in Scotland is beginning to badly lag behind the rest of the UK. Key gaps look to be a LIFE replacement, and an equivalent to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund available in England.
* That lag on funding, accompanied by no word on key FFSN asks - an environment bill, no signals on legally binding targets and little detail on watchdog - point to potential tensions should the HLS reflect the direction that the Nature Emergency Debate in November took, with a progressive motion changed by SNP and conservatives to consist of a focus on what is already happening, with the sub-text that this is somehow enough (despite State of Nature).
* No response to LINK yet from Roseanna C on the letter LINK CEOs on biodiversity engagement, and we are past the 6-week window. We have been promised (Bridget Campbell) closer engagement with the 7 SG Biodiversity Projects (including the critical Project 3, the next Scottish Biodiversity Strategy) starting in January. We are holding off pressure until we see what materialises.
* **Edinburgh Declaration:** LINK has now signed-up to this and the wording remains helpful in terms of holding govt (and local govt) to account. The document will remain open for sign-on up to COP15 in the Autumn (dates not yet finalised) but, to date, sign-up looks quite disappointing (especially compared to Boris’s Leaders’ Pledge for Nature). Individual LINK members should consider sign-up (SWT and RSPB both now signatories). This is one helpful way we can visibly promote ‘team Scotland’ without compromising other LINK advocacy. The mention of NGO role in the ED was a direct LINK insert.
* Craig – Changes in NatureScot – Sally Thomas has retired, who was our main contact, – she will be replaced by Nick Halfhide, Aileen Stewart is covering this role and will become the deputy head when Nick returns.
* Deborah - Biodiversity Challenge Fund 3rd round re-opened for applications this week: <https://www.nature.scot/funding-and-projects/biodiversity-challenge-fund-bcf>
* We’ve been told there will be a Green Challenge Fund announcement soon – but this is not yet public  – and it’s not very much. Not sure how we can welcome this –the disparity between the nations has hit but the response was to ask NS to find some funding form their meagre budget. Which they’ve done but it won’t / can’t be much.
  1. **Delivering the Goods Report – Craig**
* Consultant has been chosen – Lloyd Austin – meeting with him this week to discuss next steps
* Report will update a series of case studies, from the original 2008 Delivering the Goods report, which shows the value of NGO sector and what we have delivered as well as the benefits
* Due end of Feb – will be launched before election.
  1. **NatureScot engagement**
* Report from NatureScot on nature based jobs report as part of green recovery. There are some significant problems as to how they have defined those jobs, eg it excludes NGO sector jobs.
* Craig – Symptomatic of what we have been taking about for the last 6 months. It is a blind spot by NatureScot & SG about the contribution of NGOs. Why Delivering the Goods report will be really important.
* Craig – Continued to try and get engagement from NatureScot on the biodiversity process – still waiting as SG has taken biodiversity in-house. Bridget Campbell has promised to involve us early in the new year.
* Alan – Lack of engagement from NatureScot on badgers. NatureScot are doing a desktop study on the threat from badgers. There have been various meetings between Eddie Palmer and Deborah on this. Deborah has spoken to Francesca. There is no direct to threat to badgers at the moment. Scottish Badgers fear NatureScot’s animal management framework team have a reputation for bumping off animal species e.g. beavers. If anyone wants to know more about the specific issues around badgers please get in touch with Eddie Palmer.

1. **Nature Networks update**

* Film panel event last Thursday – went well with good turnout.
* There will be a seminar on 12th Jan organised by RSPB, SWT & WWF. They are taking bookings for this. It is a good opportunity to get the message across to MSPs on why nature networks are important.
* NPF4 contained references to NN plus sections on NBS.

1. **Update on targets work**

* Craig, Deborah and Juliet have the next ELUK meeting tomorrow
* We now have 4 nature target officers in post as of last week – now in a position to discuss four country advocacy going forward
* Each target officer will present opportunities and challenges for target advocacy in each of the four countries
* We will then discuss the outputs needed to make the most of these opportunities – build a workplan from this
* Juliet’s work will closely align with Miriam’s and the FFSN third ask ‘To set clear targets for environmental protection’ – Juliet will be rolling out advocacy ideas via FFSN and supporting Miriam, who is leading this, on campaign actions. This will kick off in the new year.

1. **Protected Areas**

* Workshops which NatureScot have been running. They are currently undertaking a review of protected areas which is looking at 6 deep-dive areas. They ran workshops on 3 of them. They seem to just invite a select and random group of people to each one. Different members of staff from RSPB got an invite to the three.
* Isobel attended one on how we can use behavioral science to better engage land owners and land managers – breaking stigmas around protected areas being restrictive and containing and trying to change the framing of how people see them. It was quite abstract e.g. how to use story telling in changing landowners views etc.
* Bit of a shame to not see the NGO sector there in greater numbers. Isobel fed back to NatureScot that we are disappointed that more LINK members haven’t been invited along to these workshops.
* Deborah attended one on how protected areas sit within an ecological network approach.
* One of the RSPB science team attended one on the condition of protected sites.
* Helen said there has been a common theme with NatureScot – the technical workshops that they have organized for beavers. Invitees are essentially drawn out of a hat. There needs to be more expertise from NGOs on these technical groups.
* Bruce said NatureScot has suggested that SWT haven’t stepped up to the plate by not sharing enough info on beavers, whereas lack of input on beavers is due to SWT not having enough capacity to do this.
* Isobel says this dismisses the role of NGOs - we aren’t just here to advocate stuff; we actually deliver things on the ground as well.

1. **Species Champions**

* Newsletter will be sent out by the end of next week
* Due to lack of site visit content – Juliet has created a space for host members to write short articles on any Species Champions matter – many thanks to those who have offered to write something!
* The joint letter to Roseanna Cunningham calling on the Scottish Government to deliver legally binding nature targets received 30 MSPs signature from across 4 parties
* No SNP signatures despite being approached several times
* Great to see some Species Champions activity over the last couple months
* SC in nature emergency debate – Mark Ruskell, Claudia Beamish, Alison Johnstone contributing
* Claudia Beamish sang the initiatives praises at the NN film event last week – highlighted how the initiative has inspired many MSPs to learn about their species and their habitats – in particular Colin Smyth’s work with Scottish Badgers
* Juliet sent round a doodle poll to host members for the SC Zoom roundtable. This is a chance for host members to discuss how they would like to see the initiative refreshed. We will also be discussing how species will be allocated to new MSPs and how we can maximise MSP Champion engagement in the new term. This will be end of Jan/start of Feb – Craig Macadam to chair – let Juliet know if you didn’t receive the Doodle Poll and would like to come along
* MSP Species Champions standing down – [here](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NMdNLZVhhZ_9dk0xdG22-bhHwMO5X0KIed1s_S81MDM/edit?usp=sharing)

1. **AOB**

* Vhairi circulated an email to Conveners and Vice-Conveners about LINK’s Land Use Strategy consultation response. Last week a consultation on the [next Land Use Strategy](https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-economy/consultation-scotlands-third-land-use-strategy/) was released with a deadline in mid-January. The Land Use and Land Reform Group will be leading on drafting a LINK response to this but, as the Strategy covers a wide range of land uses, they would like input from as many LINK Groups as possible on the government’s proposals. There will be a meeting of the Land Use Group to discuss the LINK response on 15th December, 1400-1530. Any member from any group is welcome to join this to share ideas to be incorporated into the first draft of the response. Please contact Vhairi if you would like to join. You can also send any thoughts over to Vhairi, John Thomson and Andrew Midgley by 15th December to be taken into account. The draft link response is available here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I_4fGp1UUxqaDJmHN0-MTfEEHYOXri6n77eHBhUNTzk/edit?usp=sharing>
* Pheasant releases – Bruce it is a wider issue which RSPB have been leading on for a while. SWT have been getting increasing reports of the number of sightings on reserves in the last few years. There has been a huge shoot right next to it where they have released thousands of birds next door. Asking if there is any wider appetite amongst the group to do anything on game birds. However, understanding of capacity issues. Craig – LINK has dipped in an out of this debate over the years, particularly in the run up to the WANE Act. Buglife did some work, about 10 years ago, on pheasant releases. Buglife might be interested. Scottish Wild Land Group also expressed concerns over pheasant populations and how damaging they are for biodiversity. Isobel – RSPB might already been doing work on this. Been looking at implications of the DEFRA decision on licensing.

1. **Date for the next meeting TBC.**

**Summary of Actions for 9 December Wildlife Group meeting**

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| **Action No.** | **Action** | **To be actioned by** | **Status** |
| **1.** | Workplan tidied up and circulated to WG group in the new year. | Deborah, Craig, Juliet, Paul | January |
| **2.** | Reaching out to BES (Sarah McKain) on 30x30 discussion – BES are reviewing current protected areas and different designations. | Arina | Ongoing |
| **3.** | Article/blog on raising the profile on INNS via FoS | Paul or Craig | Early 2021 |
| **4.** | Lodge a PQ on what progress the SG INNS group has made on non-native species and how many meetings have taken place in 2020. | Arina | January |