

Minutes of the LINK Board meeting held on 28 January 2021 via Zoom.

Summary of Actions

| Actions | Responsibility | Due date | Completion date |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Investigate robustness of IT | Karen/Deborah | asap | |
| Write to explain approach to subs alongside invoices | Karen and Tim | Summer | |
| Review of Organisational/Business Supporters | Deborah and the subgroup | By April Board | |
| Arrange cooption of Karen Blackport | Deborah | asap | |
| Review of investment/endowment fund | Funding Subgroup | By April Board | |
| Consider options for individual supporters of LINK | Perth staff team | By April Board | |
| Strategic Plan completion for members' website | Deborah | asap | 3 Feb 2021 |
| Add stakeholder relationships to Operations update | Deborah | ongoing | |
| Add quarterly short term risk analysis to Governance updates | Deborah | ongoing | |
| Sign agreement with ERCS | Charles | Asap | |
| New Honorary Fellow suggestions | all | Ongoing to AGM | |

Present: Sam Gardner, Mary Scott, Tim Ambrose, Craig Macadam, Helen Senn (left before the Governance item), Beryl Leatherland, Lucy Graham, Paul Walton, Kevin Lelland, Charles Dundas (Chair)

Staff - Deborah Long CO, Karen Paterson FOM (for the budget and financial items), Alice Walsh DO.

Apologies There were none, full attendance.

1. Minutes, Matters and Reports

Minutes of October 2020 meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved, proposed by Tim, seconded by Mary. All actions in the matters arising paper were completed.

2. Budget and Financials

2.1 Budget outturn to 31.12.2020 and Adjusted 5-year Projection.

Membership income was more than we had initially expected though we continue to anticipate a reduction next year. All spend was within the projections, so there is a healthy outturn for the year.

In light of recent cyber attacks on SEPA and WTS, the Board agreed LINK could spend some funding on checking the robustness of our IT systems, approaching our current IT support company in the first instance. **Action: Karen/Deborah.**

The updated 5 year forecast indicates that LINK would be able to operate in five years on current projections

2.2 DPF Update – Spend to 31.12.2020 and 2021 DPF

It was noted that the fund for this year was mainly allocated, as expected for this point in the year. The allocation for the DPF from April 2021 is £17k.

2.3 2021 Budget.

Deborah highlighted the anticipated drop in membership income, difficult to predict. There are several live membership queries too. On income, public sector funding is not assured, though discussions are in place. On expenditure, it assumes travel will resume from summer onwards. There is a new line for the communications role, as in our strategy. The line on optional consultant costs is disaggregated from audit costs. This enables LINK to be able to use consultants such as Lloyd Austin next year for Brexit related work and support to the AM. The salary line includes extension of the Species Champions and Campaigns Officer roles beyond the end of March 2021. The budget assumes the ERCS will be independent by July. It is a breakeven budget for LINK. Trustees approved the budget.

2.4 Update from FSG on membership sub proposals

Tim noted that the principles remain the same. Invoices will be sent out in early summer. There will be an accompanying note, giving members the option to base their subs on estimated income for this year rather than the income in their last accounts, and also indicating they should contact LINK on an individual basis if they have trouble paying their sub. This continues the approach from last year, broadly adopting the policy of retaining members rather than enforcing subs levels on out of date figures. It was suggested that the option of spreading payments could be offered at the outset, rather than reduced subscriptions, as cash flow was more important to some members than the overall amount. The option to negotiate is already covered. This was agreed. **Action: Karen, Tim**

2.5 Funding strategy

The paper was brought to the most recent FSG meeting and outcomes incorporated in the paper.

Deborah explained that the paper is more an outline than a strategy, some of which has come out of the Covid impact surveys she conducted with members and discussions arising from that process. LINK had a KPI to raise 60% of Essential Services from member subs and in-kind contributions. Proposals included revisiting our Organisational Supporter offer, to increase our income and help member bodies too. The CpPs are a potential hook and pull factor, hence the timing. Sam Gardner, Mike Robinson, Ian Findlay and Karen Blackport, an RZSS Board member with relevant experience were prepared to help. With respect to the KPI, the FSG had agreed that raising membership subscriptions and increasing the number of member bodies substantially had little potential. Trustees broadly supported the proposal, noting that public support for our sector was falling, despite what is delivered for national outcomes, that High Net Worth Individuals could be another route when considering income from individual supporters. **Action: Perth staff** team to consider options for individual supporters of LINK and bring proposals, if any, to FSG and then April Board. These KPIs were for internal use rather than external promotion. The 60% KPI should not influence LINK in directions that would reduce available funding from the public sector or charitable trusts. The proposal to set- up a subgroup to consider options and to bring its proposals to the April Board meeting was agreed. Trustees agree to co-opt Karen Blackport onto LINK's board for 12 months, and approved the timescale outlined in the strategy paper. **Action: Deborah to arrange co-option of Karen Blackport. Action: Deborah to start the agreed work with the new Board sub Group and bring proposals back to the April Board.**

The FSG would also be looking at how LINK uses its banked cash reserves, and to revisiting the old idea of an endowment fund. Tim explained his thinking on the question of investment/Endowment fund for LINK, followed by some discussion among trustees. The FSG has not come to a conclusion. Charles invited trustees not on the FSG to comment to it, also reiterating that FSG discussions were open to any trustee. **Action: FSG will consider further and report its conclusions to the April Board meeting.**

3. Operations

Most reports were for noting and were not discussed. On Staffing, Lisa Webb has tendered her resignation. All agreed she will be sorely missed. Recruitment is now in progress and no gap was anticipated.

On the Strategic Plan, Deborah aims to have this completed as soon as possible. Trustees will be advised when it is available on the members part of the website. **Action: Deborah.**

3.1 Stakeholder relationships

This new heading was added to the Operations paper to summarise high level and cross network progress outwith what is happening via the groups. Comments included the proposal to reinstate board to board meetings with NatureScot and CNPA in due course; encouraging the Wildlife Crime group to learn from the Wildlife group's relationship with NS; whether the Strategic Projects Alliance can consider Scotland's future relationship with EU LIFE funding. Trustees agreed it was a really useful addition to the Board papers and should continue to be part of the Operations paper.

The proposal to provide a letter of support to CNPA for their Heritage Horizons project proposal was approved by the Board. The Board also supported the proposal to circulate the letter to members operating within the CNPA area to ensure they are aware of the opportunities this may present to them if successful.. **Action Deborah**

There were no questions on Communications, Funding and Fundraising.

4. Governance (Paper E)

The Lobbying register update was noted.

4.1 Risk register

Trustees agreed that they should receive quarterly reports on significant risks, consequences and planned action over the next quarter within the Governance paper, in addition to the annual review of the whole risk register. Two new risks were added, on Global Pandemics and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The Board approved the updated Risk register for 2021. **Action Deborah.**

4.2 Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland

The board approved the agreement outlined in the paper, setting up a secondment arrangement for staff until the ERCS becomes fully independent, anticipated from July 2021. It was noted that Campbell Gemmell is standing down as chair, and Lloyd Austin is stepping up in his stead. The ERCS is renewing recruitment for a Treasurer, the role was filled *pro tem* by Deborah. Recruitment for an inhouse solicitor could now proceed as funding was confirmed. **Action: Charles to sign the agreement.**

4.3 Honorary Fellows

Comments were invited on the names proposed for the next AGM, on the basis that neither had so far been approached. Trustees were asked to consider further names to put forward during the year. This was agreed. **Action: Trustee consider candidates. Deborah to approach those agreed.**

4.4 Future Board dates and themes

Trustees would note the dates and were happy with the themes proposed. The next meeting would include a session on LINK's first objective, A sustainable Scotland.

5. AOB and future meetings:

Operating Principles: Deborah advised these have been updated to include more on the role of staff in groups, plus tidying up of language. A tracked changes version is available if trustees wished to review.

| Board meetings | Network meetings |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 28 th April | To be agreed |
| 26 th August | |
| 21 st October | |

AW 28.1.2021