

Meeting Notes- Wildlife Group meeting 15th June (14:00am-16:00pm) via Zoom

Attendees- Juliet Caldwell (LINK), Paul Walton (RSPB Scotland), Alistair Whyte (Plantlife Scotland), Katie O'Donnell (KSB), Darryl Cox (BBCT), Annie Robinson (CIEEM), Bruce Wilson (SWT), Eddie Palmer (Scottish Badgers), Arina Russell (WTS), Isobel Mercer (RSPB Scotland), Natalie Stevenson (Buglife), Helen Taylor (RZSS), Nora Casey (RSPB Scotland), Katie O'Donnell (KSB).

Apologies – Danièle Muir (British Dragonflies), Calum Duncan (MCS)

Chaired by – Alistair Whyte (Plantlife Scotland)

Summary of actions from previous 19th April meeting

Action No.	Action	To be actioned by	Status
1.	Initiate meeting with Anna Brand (SPICe) for NBS briefing/workshop.	Bruce	Completed
2.	Article/blog on raising the profile on INNS via FoS	Paul Walton	24 th – 30 th May
3.	Circulate Nature INNS paper	Paul Walton	April
4.	Ask Anna Brand and Alexa Morrison from SPICe to write a briefing on CBD COP15 for MSPs following the Parliamentary Roadshow event.	Paul and Isobel	Completed
5.	Update the Green Recovery live projects list	Wildlife Group members	Ongoing

1. General Updates

- a. Acceptance of Previous Minutes & Review of Actions
- b. Meetings Attended

2. Update on biodiversity process

a. Post 2020 biodiversity delivery

- There is written confirmation that LINK member NGOS will be engaged with the strategic development of the next SBS, which will be a brand-new strategy, and its delivery plan (route map to 2020). The establishment of the Strategic Project Alliance which LINK has 5 seats on. Deborah Long sits on this group for LINK. NLHF saying the environment sector has to be more like culture sector where gov officials and voluntary sector work closely to see what their priorities are. The environment is complex and multi-faceted, so it is difficult to get one view.
- SBS development has gone quiet and eNGOs have not recently been engaged. NatureScot have said they are waiting for the global process to develop. Mixed messages around CBD process – the next global

targets will be weak/IUCN invasive species target is looking stronger. This target looks to reduce the rate at which new non-native species are established.

- Biodiversity Intactness Index – RSPB has been working on. It takes a habitat, looks at the species composition of that habitat and a particular location. It then looks elsewhere in the world for a comparable habitat that has the very least human impact on it. It then works out, for countries and regions, a Biodiversity Intactness Index. Scotland out of 250 countries at the bottom of the list. The State of Nature report records current trends – it does not include historic impact. The Biodiversity Intactness index indirectly captures this state of the environment to go alongside the trend. [SPICE done a briefing on Biodiversity Intactness Index](#) – it now has parliamentary ownership.
- GB non-natives species strategy is being reviewed by consultants. Paul had a meeting with consultants. Paul sits on the WCL invasive species group. The JNCC UK indicator of non-native species shows it is getting worse across marine, terrestrial, and freshwater environments - the strategy is not working. ScotGov is part of the GB non-native species set up. Paul asked for access to the programme board which ScotGov sits on - it is a closed shop. Applying pressure to this via WCL group.
- [SEPA River Basin Management Plan consultation draft](#). CIEEM are producing a consultation response. They have an assumption that 97% of water bodies are free from INNS. Area that is missing – gap for a consultation response. It closes 22nd June. Focusing on removing barriers for fish migration, sustainable resilient and rural management (not much detail and not enough partnership working) and wastewater. There is another consultation response coming up in September. Bruce suggested if we are to do a response to the RBMP – if we can also focus on regional land use plans – almost absent in that document. Annie to share CIEEM response when ready. Juliet, Alistair and Paul to put together a LINK response. Bruce can have a go at LINK lines to do with land use policy stuff. CIEEM included a lot of lack of reference & restoration sites and where they fit in with the pilot land use regional partnerships. <https://consultation.sepa.org.uk/rbmp/draft-river-basin-management-plan-for-scotland/>
- Future of the protected area working group - one of the working groups under the previous biodiversity structures. It is cross sector group gov agencies – we have 2 LINK seats on it – Isobel and Stuart Brookes NTS. That group is not going to sit under the biodiversity strategy structures but will exist as a cross sector working group. The group has not met in a while – poor attendance. They are going to refresh in the autumn. Isobel will circulate new papers and ask members if they want to refresh who takes up those seats – or ask more seats.
- Site condition monitoring has progressed. On site condition monitoring, NatureScot’s Scientific Advisory Committee were commissioned to form a sub-group to look into recommendations for a new monitoring system. Their report is here: [Report to the Scientific Advisory Committee by the Sub-group reviewing on land monitoring and surveillance by NatureScot | NatureScot](#). NatureScot staff are now looking into how the recommendations can be implemented and will be trialing a three-tiered approach. Major landowners group working on condition of sites on major landowners’ land. This is a delivery arm of favorable condition. That group has not recently met p Isobel has asked NatureScot to provide clarity on whether that group will respond and relate to protected areas working group. Sally Thomas (Chair of protected areas working group) retired. Unclear who new chair is - could be Ben Ross (new head of protected areas at NatureScot) and Brian Eardley (leads on policy).
- Arina noted that it is important to tie 30x30 in with advocacy and policy around Saving Scotland’s Rainforest as it links into protected areas.
- It was asked whether we can expect any change with the new directors of SG who work on biodiversity? NatureScot trying to work closely with biodiversity officials – result is NatureScot become a wing of government. NatureScot are already thinking about more landscape scale project work, like Cairngorms Connect. However, they really need to involve eNGOs as we will be involved in the delivery of it.

- Paul Walton is attending an event of the Royal Society ‘Conservation Connections’ – about biodiversity conservations and networks. Paul can report back on this.
- Meeting with SG biodiversity directors. Arina meeting them in summer and can report back on how it goes.
- Frustration around creation of the SG Plant Conservation Strategy as it was developed without knowing what is happening with the SBS.
- SG INNS group – Arina had a previous action to ask an MSP to ask a PQ on the progress of the INNS group. Answer will be circulated with the notes. The answer was alarming – they have not met due to Covid, and they will be directing action on INNS via the Alliance for Scotland’s Rainforest. Arina will raise it with Colin Edwards from Advocacy Group of Alliance for Scotland’s Rainforest if it goes any further.
- WCL INNS group putting pressure on DEFRA when it came to transposing EU legislation into domestic legislation. They have transposed into Scottish legislation. The key ask of WCL has been for an inspectorate for INNS, which employ 10-20 people. Biosecurity for animal and plant health works well - £3m spent on it ever year. Biosecurity for INNS gets less than £1m a year.
- RSPB has a new member of the forestry team – Andrew Weatherall.

b. Nature Positive

- RSPB has a new strategy about carbon zero/nature positive and framing the twin crises. The net zero 1.5c simple global targets for climate gained traction amongst policy makers has led to an international move towards finding something comparable for biodiversity. The concept Nature Positive is trying to capture the idea of bending the curve of halting decline and restoring nature. The concept of ecosystem restoration is important for Scotland and the EU Decade on Ecosystem Restoration fits with Nature Positive as a concept and the SG and NatureScot thinking on large projects like Cairngorms Connect.
- There are two related but distinct terms. Nature Positive is an overarching concept and underneath that is biodiversity net gain is specifically for planning. RSPB development – planning team have been working on this to develop principles of what net gain would look like (informed by CIEEM principles) and what it would look like in Scotland.
- Agreed it would be helpful to have a LINK briefing on net positive effects – but could sit on the planning group with input from other groups.
- CIEEM have produced a [briefing](#) on wider environmental net gain, a practical definition of the term and legislative policy and strategic context from which biodiversity net gain can be delivered. Principles are being developed within CIEEM on wider biodiversity net gain which will be published within the next month. Scotland – positive effects fir biodiversity and the SG working group looking at this – Paul Sizeland is involved in this and have consulted with local biodiversity partnerships recently. CIEEM sit on this working group. SG are keen to avoid complex metrics. CIEEM trying to get across – whatever happens with NPF4, it needs to evidenced and clear. Concerned that each local authority will have to come up with their own principles. Next meeting with working group in July.
- Nature Networks – SSEN – running out of land that they can put net gain on, so they need delivery partners for support. Local NN – there is not the local authority expertise of staff to coordinate this. Wildlife Group can make the argument why NN are so important for delivering multiple benefits and define why the strategic planning for nature is important. Links into Land Use Strategy and RLUPs.
- RSPB team have a meeting with Mairi Gougeon this week, but it is largely about farming.

3. NatureScot/RBGE COP event

- NatureScot are working with SG to hold a webinar on the Edinburgh Process – it is focused on the Edinburgh Declaration and what we are looking to get out of COP15. The event is planned for 24th June,

and we have a five mins slot on our aspirations for what will come from the Declaration. Paul Walton is going to present and will discuss the Biodiversity Intactness Index – RSPB has been working on this. This

- NatureScot and RBGE – events planned last year pre-Edi Declaration and COP15. Des Thompson called Paul Walton to ask if LINK could lead on some events – depends on capacity and planning with covid restrictions.
- LINK, with the support of RSPB, plans to coordinate **‘Big Nature Fest’**, a two-day series of member-led events on Friday 30 and Saturday 31 July, to highlight the FFSN’s call for nature recovery targets and to engage a public audience with the campaign. Miriam has sent an email out to ask organisations if they would like to run an event or are planning to run an event that could be part of the programme. To engage a mainstream audience with the campaign for nature recovery targets; to demonstrate the link between targets and the work that members do; to make some noise about targets ahead of the Programme for Government in September; to increase participation in the Fight for Scotland’s Nature e-action.

4. Update on targets work

- ELUK Targets Group put together a short film on the 1st of June on the importance of COP15 – illustrating the climate and nature link. Included a slide at the end with details of the FFSN e-action. Available on LINK’s [YouTube channel](#).
- UK Government announced a legally binding target to halt species decline within the Environment Bill. However, this is not hugely strong and WCL’s State of Nature Campaign will continue to advocate for this to be strengthened. There is a threat to the habitat regulations in England – amendments trying to sever the link between the EU directives and the regulations which would make it easier to make extensive changes to the regulations in the future. Isobel to send Calum Duncan, for his targets presentation at the parliamentary roadshow, a couple of lines on how we don’t expect the Scottish Government to copy this given their commitment to keep pace and it would be good to see a public statement on this.
- ELUK Targets group had a meeting 9th June. WCL, WEL and NIEL have all produced their 30x30 papers. Isobel is leading on the LINK 30x30 paper which is currently being circulated for comments and will be ready by the end of June. JNCC are taking a chairing role around 30x30. The ELUK group discussed organising a meeting with JNCC to do some information finding and get some stakeholder involvement.
- ELUK target officers are working on a briefing on monitoring, reporting, verification, and enforcement strategies with regards to targets. Highlighting the different scales at which implementation is important and where there needs to be coordination from different levels – local to global. This will be circulated for comment this week (w/b 14th June).

a. Parliamentary Roadshow

- Parliamentary Roadshow event on 17th June. 12 MSP sign ups so far. Scotland Europa have offered to promote the event through their European network. Charles Dundas is hosting with speakers: Debbie Bassett (NatureScot), Ariel Brunner (Birdlife), Calum Duncan (Marine Conservation Society) and Georgina Chandler (RSPB Scotland). SPICe is preparing a briefing for MSPs on CBD COP15 which will be circulated after.

5. Nature Champions

- Officially launched on the 3rd June. Held an event for MSPS – 22 attended as well as LINK members. Colin Smyth hosted the event with presentations from Deborah, Arina, Calum and Ruby Temple-Long. Lots of MSPs got in touch after the event to get signed up. Host members should continue to look at the [live list](#) excel sheet to see which MSPs meet the general criteria for becoming a nature champion for a specific species or habitat – most important point is their geographical area. Juliet will continue to organise meetings with host members to discuss next steps.
- The Species Champion film was screened at the Nature Champions event and is now on the [LINK YouTube channel](#). This included clips from Claudia Beamish, John Finnie, Finlay Carson, Maree Todd.
- Adam Barnett from RSPB, who leads the Rethink Nature Species Champion initiative in England has left. His replacement is Jacques Villemot – Marine Policy Officer at RSPB.
- Question around dealing with MSPs, whose habitats/species are linked, are on opposing sides of the bench on a future issue and how this can be dealt with.

6. AOB

- Quinquennial Review of the schedule 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. List that confers the protection that all wild birds have to non-birds. QQR is every 5 years. There has been a change in the way these lists have been constructed. Protection from being killed – e.g., mountain hare protection goes on schedule 5 for Scotland. New approach says using the IUCN red list for GB and any species that is critically endangered or in danger can get on the list – and any that is not, cannot. Paul Walton wrote to NatureScot about ensuring the mountain hare will remain protected. Pine marten protection is at risk. The consultation is out now and is worded ‘the principle is not up for grabs. Joint LINK letter on this, led by WCL. Link to [JNCC site](#) re QQR7.
- Reminder to members to let LINK know what you thought of the Networking event last Wednesday by filling out this [online survey](#).
- [PQ](#) on use of insecticides in fish farms.
- [Bog Day](#) is an annual celebration of the brilliance of our peatlands, which will take place on Sunday 25th July this year.
- Paul met with Claudia Gebhardt at Bat Conservation Trust and has invited her to join the Wildlife Group.

Summary of Actions for 15th June Wildlife Group meeting

Action No.	Action	To be actioned by	Status
1.	Check with Deborah and Vhairi whether LINK should organise a workshop across working groups to develop an understanding and position on the following concepts: nature positive and biodiversity net gain.	Juliet Caldwell	June
2.	Ask Des Thompson for more information on LINK role in NatureScot/RBGE events on COP15/Edi Declaration.	Paul Walton	End of June

3.	Forward Helen Taylor information on QQR consultation.	Paul Walton	June
4.	Find out from Vhairi and Deborah if there is anything critical Paul needs to include in his presentation for NatureScot Edinburgh Process/COP15 presentation on 24 th June	Juliet Caldwell	Before 24 th June