

Wildlife and  
Countryside



# Making the Link

Thirty years of Wildlife and Countryside Link

# Making the Link

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“ There is nothing those with power who are defending the status quo like more than for those advocating change in the public interest to argue amongst themselves. Some good causes get nowhere for this reason. Over the last 30 years, those arguing the case for our wildlife and countryside have had real successes - in part because they are right, in part because of the wonderful work of particular groups - and in part because Link has ensured the movement has remained a largely united and coherent, and thus a powerful force. ”

Peter Melchett  
Chair of Link, 1980 - 1988

This anniversary publication follows how member organisations, their representatives and Link staff have helped run and develop Link, not as an organisation in its own right but as a collective, and reflects some of its many achievements over three decades.

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# In the beginning

Environmental organisations have long recognised the value of a national coalition for increasing public awareness and support, for exchanging best practice and for championing their cause. In 1980 Wildlife Link took over from two umbrella bodies that in their time had served wildlife and the environment well - the Council for Nature<sup>1</sup> and the Council for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo)<sup>2</sup>. Its formation was a response to increasing evidence of damage to wildlife and the environment and to a more demanding political climate.

It was clear that the defensive and narrow protectionist stance that had dominated previous coalitions had to change to one where a healthy natural environment was championed as a central requirement of a modern and healthy society and where campaigning had to move from a threat to a solution-based approach.

The UK's voluntary environment and animal welfare groups agreed to establish Link in August 1979 but it was not until March 1980 that it held its first formal meeting under the auspices of CoEnCo. Link was based upon a principle already established in the USA by a coalition group called 'Monitor'. Records describe Lord Peter Melchett, its first Chairman, as having been "the driving force behind getting the organisation going despite considerable establishment bias". He was convinced from his experience as a junior Minister that delegations putting forward a consensus view were usually more effective.

A sister organisation - Countryside Link - was formed in 1982 to look after the interests of the countryside but it was to be a further eleven years before the two organisations joined forces and Wildlife and Countryside Link was born.

In the intervening years Link has championed many environmental causes and has grown into a respected and powerful mechanism for collective action with over 30 member organisations supported by more than eight million people in the UK.

<sup>1</sup> The Council for Nature had been established in 1958 as the umbrella body for natural history organisations, although its remit later widened to absorb environmental and wildlife issues. It co-ordinated the hugely successful Nature Weeks in 1964 and 1966 which increased public awareness of wildlife, was a co-sponsor of the *Countryside in 1970* conferences inspired and chaired by the Duke of Edinburgh and co-ordinated the Parliamentary campaign that led to the Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act 1975. In 1979, the year of Wildlife Link's formation, the Council for Nature was disbanded.

<sup>2</sup> The Council for Environmental Conservation had been set up in 1969 as an umbrella body for everything environmental other than natural history. CoEnCo's finances became increasingly tight and it was disbanded in 1982.

## A view from the first Chair laying the foundation



Peter Melchett 1979 © WCL

Ms Thatcher's election in 1979 played a small part in Wildlife Link's formation. It left me without a full-time job after nearly five years as a Minister - and keen to do more work on nature conservation (I was already a Trustee of WWF). So when Joanna Gordon-Clarke (whale campaigner) and Richard Fitter (international conservationist) asked me if I'd be interested in chairing a co-ordination body for conservation NGOs that did not yet exist, I said 'yes'.

The real genesis of Link was the growth in influence of environmental groups like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth through the 1970s, and the failure of the existing liaison body, the Council for Nature, to accommodate these changes. That in turn stemmed from the Council slowly becoming more of an end in itself, less a service to its member organisations - a common and damaging fate for many liaison and co-ordinating bodies.

The formation was a slow and difficult process - getting an initially reluctant but crucially important Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) on board was the key. In that process, its then Parliamentary Officer, Stuart Housden, played an important role, supported by Tim Sands from the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. WWF (as so often) provided sufficient funds to make it happen. In the end, everyone gave up some precious independence for the good of the cause. The proposed Wildlife and Countryside Bill, the Nature Conservancy Council's unimaginably weak position on site protection and determination to ignore divided NGOs, the vital flow of information on site destruction and damage from the NCC's Chief Scientist, Derek Ratcliffe - those provided the stage on which Wildlife Link went forth, and prospered.

**Peter Melchett**  
A founder and Chair of Link, 1980 - 1988



Red deer stag © www.northeastwildlife.co.uk

# 80s

“ The massive threats facing our climate, oceans and forests make the exchange of information and ideas and policy co-ordination increasingly important.

Link provides that vital service ”

John Sauven, Executive Director, Greenpeace UK



Grey partridges © Chris Knights (ispb-images.com)

1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inaugural meeting of the Wildlife Link Committee on 26 March - on the agenda the Government's delayed Wildlife and Countryside Bill, halting grey seal culling, whales, Foreign &amp; Commonwealth Office forest clearance proposals and future European action on trade in endangered species</li> <li>• A UNEP World Conservation Strategy is launched in 32 capital cities</li> <li>• Sir Peter Scott presents habitat loss in Europe at Link's international conference on European Habitat Protection calling for new European laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post Office issues stamps for launch of Butterfly Year organised by the entomological societies and others are found in only 6% of sites surveyed in England</li> <li>• The Wildlife &amp; Countryside Act - the nation's first comprehensive wildlife law - receives Royal Assent after sustained and intensive Link lobbying and Parliamentary debate on unprecedented numbers of amendments improves the final legislation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wildlife Link is established as an independent unincorporated association</li> <li>• Government agency - the Nature Conservancy Council - calls for voluntary phasing out of lead weights in angling after Mute Swan deaths spark public concern</li> <li>• Link criticises slow Government implementation of Wildlife &amp; Countryside Act 1981 and highlights the destruction and serious threats to five of the UK's most important wildlife sites, including Halvergate Marshes, in a major report</li> <li>• Countryside Link is formed to improve liaison between the voluntary countryside sector and the Countryside Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Axe fails to fall on Nature Conservancy Council after strong support from Link and others</li> <li>• Continuing catastrophic loss and damage of Britain's wildlife habitats is condemned by Link as timetable slips for re-notification of the country's top sites and resources and manpower fail to materialise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link supports NCC's <i>Nature Conservation in Great Britain</i> - a strategy for the future of the nature conservation movement - that leads to an improved relationship between the two bodies</li> <li>• In its report, <i>Badgers, Cattle and Bovine Tuberculosis</i>, Link responds to a Government three-man review team with calls to redirect funds away from killing badgers to research to find a vaccine to protect them from the disease</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link acquires its first computer</li> <li>• European Community agrees regulations allowing grants to be paid to farmers for Environmentally Sensitive Areas</li> <li>• Link successfully campaigns to amend the Wildlife &amp; Countryside Act 1981 to make provision for habitat mapping in National Parks, to tighten up law on badger protection, and to place a requirement on the Forestry Commission to balance wood production and conservation</li> <li>• Link publishes report on effects of pesticides on wildlife, including bats, grey partridge and the wild rose as Parliament debates the Food &amp; Environment Protection Bill</li> <li>• A Link report highlights the UK's failure to implement the Berne Convention leaving species such as the otter, merlin, corncrake, and great crested newt inadequately protected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government publishes draft regulations on the sale and import of anglers' lead weights</li> <li>• Link pressure helps win International Whaling Commission moratorium on commercial whaling</li> <li>• Link's <i>Local Authorities and Wildlife Report</i> urges Government to strengthen its advice on nature conservation in its proposed revision of planning guidance to local authorities</li> <li>• The Agriculture Act 1986 places a duty on the Minister to achieve a reasonable balance between farming and conservation and to designate Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) after lobbying by Link of Ministers and Parliament</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Environment LINK is formed</li> <li>• European Year of the Environment</li> <li>• World Commission on Environment and Development unveils its report <i>Our Common Future</i> - the so-called Brundtland Report - calling for nations to commit to sustainable development</li> <li>• Government finally publishes revised guidance on planning and nature conservation showing evidence of Link lobbying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax incentives for conifer afforestation are successfully removed from the budget, and a presumption against afforestation of the English uplands and a new SSSI to stop afforestation of over 400,000 acres of the Flow Country are announced</li> <li>• Strong opposition to the proposal to sell-off the country's National Nature Reserves is made clear to the Secretary of State for the Environment</li> <li>• Link fights the British Government's negative attitudes to the European Commission's draft Habitats Directive meeting the Minister and preparing evidence to the House of Lords' European Communities Committee</li> <li>• A Link report on <i>Marine Mammals</i> and Fisheries calling for greater collaboration between all concerned sparks questions in Parliament on 'incidental take' of marine mammals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wales Environment Link is formed</li> <li>• Prime Minister's Royal Society 'green' speech the previous autumn, including a call for action on global warming and destruction of the ozone layer, provides a springboard for increased public interest in all things environmental... and the Government drops plans to privatise National Nature Reserves</li> <li>• Link's newly formed Air Pollution Group highlights the effects of acid rain on wildlife</li> <li>• After a Ministerial meeting, Link presses home its case against the break up of NCC and holds a well-attended conference - <i>Future Structures for Countryside Protection in the UK</i> - and publishes proceedings</li> </ul>



Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

# Link's first campaign

## lobbying for the first comprehensive wildlife legislation



The late 1970s saw a spate of international agreements, including the Berne Convention and the European Birds Directive, building up pressure on the British Government to introduce its own wildlife bill. The need to quantify just how bad things had become for wildlife in the British countryside in the thirty or so years since the Second World War galvanised voluntary organisations to conduct a co-ordinated campaign of unprecedented focus and ferocity. Link made the public aware of the need for action and boldly criticised the Government's figures on site damage and the inadequacy of its response.

In June 1979, the Government finally agreed that it would find time for a bill to 'strengthen the protection afforded to wildlife and their habitat, and to embrace (our) international obligations'. However, it proposed just a few sites for enhanced protection. Link warned that special treatment for a few 'super' Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Government's reliance on a purely voluntary system for the rest was simply not enough. Link demanded prior notification by landowners of potentially damaging activity on all SSSIs as a minimum.

Despite intense Link lobbying around Christmas 1979, the Government's agency - the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) - sided with the Government. NCC responded to Link's Chairman by saying that Link's demand for comprehensive protection of all SSSIs would lead to 'an unacceptable polarisation of landed interests'. The Bill was postponed and during the summer of 1980 Link undertook a major press campaign and intense behind the scenes lobbying of key players, including farming and landowner interests. By the time Link met NCC again, just before the Bill's second reading, the NCC was on the back foot. It agreed the proposals to protect only a selection of SSSIs 'did not go far enough' and asked Government for 'further measures to safeguard SSSIs'.

During the Bill's passage it became clear that Link's claim that site damage was more serious than the Government had admitted was true, with eight per cent of SSSIs being damaged rather than four. This was the final nail in the coffin for the Government's position. Finally the most comprehensive piece of wildlife legislation to date, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, passed into law after over 200 hours of debate and over 2,000 amendments giving greater protection to all SSSIs - thanks in large part to Link.

**Postscript:** It was nearly twenty years before a Government was persuaded - again in large part because of another successful Link campaign (see page 16) - that further improvements were required if our wildlife and wildlife habitats were to receive the protection they deserve.



Common blue butterfly © www.northeastwildlife.co.uk

# The battle against whaling

Wildlife protection and conservation are amongst the hallmarks of many of the organisations that make up Link, and, for many, no issue has personified the fledgling environment movement more than the battle against whaling. The UK NGOs were significant in the whaling fight from before the earliest days of a nascent Link, but in many ways it was Link that magnified their capabilities through joint actions, co-ordinated efforts and cooperative planning of campaigns.

Less than twenty-five years ago some 12,000 whales were being killed annually and the world responded by enacting the moratorium on commercial whaling. The moratorium is one of the great successes, and an icon of, the early environmental movement. Link members not only helped achieve the moratorium but are today in the vanguard of building on this success for conservation.

Link has historically provided two advisors to the UK Government for meetings of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). As an active part of the UK delegation they play a crucial role in advising on conservation policy and facilitating a bond back to the wider Link membership.

Link briefings and campaigns provided to the conservation-minded governments remain the linchpins of many of the strongest conservation initiatives within the IWC. Indeed, knife-edge votes on maintaining the moratorium on commercial whaling, the establishment of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary, and the addressing of welfare issues in the killing of whales have all relied on Link members for their success.

Unlike changing governments and civil servants, Link represents a huge resource in the form of 'institutional memory' on the whaling issue. At the present time, when many inexperienced IWC members are faced with a highly controversial move which would see a resumption of commercial whaling, Link members are drawing on their shared experience to work together to stop this potentially retrograde step.

Without a doubt, Link members have been fundamental in keeping conservation-minded countries in the trenches and steadfast in their defence of the moratorium.

**Chris Butler-Stroud**  
Chair of Link, 1997 - 2000



Whale hunter © WDCS/Mark Votier



Tinned whalemeat © Environmental Investigation Agency



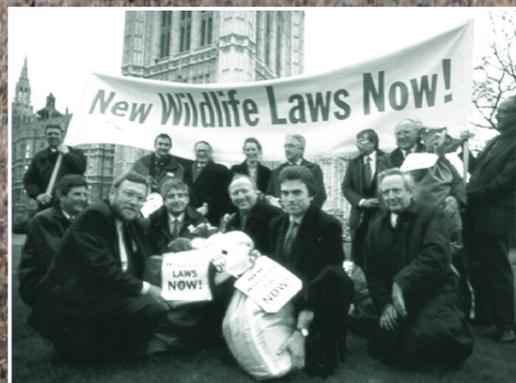
“ Link has been the trusted cornerstone in the task of convincing the UK to take an assertive role in the conservation of cetaceans at the IWC ”

**Chris Butler-Stroud, Chief Executive, WDCS**

# 90s



Link CEOs at Newbury bypass 1996 © WCL



New wildlife laws lobby 1997 © WCL



Northumberland © www.northeastwildlife.co.uk

## 1990

- Northern Ireland Environment Link is formed - National Link bodies exist for the first time in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- Despite achieving some significant amendments, Link is disappointed as Environmental Protection Act is passed breaking up the Nature Conservancy Council
- The first Environment White Paper produced by any British Government - *This Common Inheritance* - is published with much input from Link including a large national conference in York addressed by Environment Minister, David Trippier MP

## 1991

- Link's benchmark report on SSSIs: *A Health Check* highlights the continuing damage to the UK's most important wildlife sites and calls for strengthened legislation
- A *Charter for Environmental Education* produced jointly with the Nature Conservancy Council and recognised in *This Common Inheritance* influences Government to increase the profile of environmental education in the new National Curriculum
- Link's proposed changes to the Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty on Environmental Protection are influential in the UK Government's support for the Treaty Parties' decision to impose a fifty year ban on mining in Antarctica

## 1992

- The Earth Summit is held in Rio de Janeiro and the Prime Minister signs the Convention on Biological Diversity
- Protection of Badgers Act receives Royal Assent - Link helps co-ordinate lobbying on Roy Hughes MP's successful Badger Bill that makes it an offence in most circumstances to interfere with badger setts
- The largest research project so far in Link's history results in a major discussion paper - *Future Forestry* - which is submitted as evidence to the House of Commons' Select Committee on Forestry and the Environment
- Link's marine work builds on its coastal zone management proposals, charts the way forward for marine protected areas and compiles a *Common Agenda* for a UK marine strategy



Protection of Badgers Act 1992

## 1993

- Wildlife Link merges with Countryside Link to become Wildlife and Countryside Link
- Link seminar with Transport 2000 leads to joint statement on road building backed by 45 members from all Links published at the Climate Action Network's conference on Transport and Climate Change
- Continued marginalisation of the environment from mainstream agricultural policy in the newly reformed European Common Agricultural Policy prompts the Link paper *The Environment at the Heart of CAP* and the start of a sustained campaign for further reform

## 1994

- Government publishes *Biodiversity - The UK Action Plan*
- Link helps secure a European regulation limiting the length of drift nets in high seas and runs a successful workshop to set a joint agenda across the statutory and voluntary sectors for raising awareness of marine conservation
- A new joint Links Oil and Gas Consortium opens up a dialogue with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for the first time and the majority of 'no-go' areas the Consortium lists are not licensed by DTI in its 16th round of licenses for development
- Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer drops proposals for merger of English Nature and the Countryside Commission

## 1995

- Link's governance structure is changed so that the Chair of Link is drawn from a member body as opposed to the Houses of Parliament
- Regulations to implement the EU Habitats Directive in the UK were passed in 1994 but Link continues lobbying as progress to establish SACs is painfully slow. Link publishes *Marine Conservation and the Habitats Directive* to highlight a particular area of concern
- Government publishes White Paper on Rural England and Link expresses concern at proposals to relax planning controls. Link plans to maximise the value of the National Agri- Environment Forum proposed in the paper and to seek membership

## 1996

- Government endorses the main proposals in the UK Biodiversity Steering Group's Report on biodiversity, including welcoming the objectives and targets in an initial 116 species action plans and 14 habitat action plans
- First World Oceans Day - nationwide celebration of our seas
- Link Agriculture Group gains seven seats on the new agri-environment forum and launches a *Brighter Future for Green Schemes* outlining 7 principles for improving agri-environment schemes
- Nearly two years of negotiations between Link and the Forestry Industry Council of Great Britain culminates in *The UK Forestry Accord* - a consensus on the future direction of UK forestry
- Despite a model campaign, Link fails to retain the ban on mesh non-filament gill nets increasing the likelihood of harbour porpoise bycatch

## 1997

- Launch of *Wildlife Charter* in House of Commons helps put pressure on the first Labour Government for eighteen years to fast track its manifesto pledge for wildlife law reform
- A number of Link proposals to strengthen control of trade infringements are included in new EC CITES Wildlife Trade Implementation Regulations
- Link's report, *The Great SAC Race - the way forward with the Habitats Directive* in the UK, identifies nearly 300 extra sites and 140 further boundary revisions it considers worthy of SAC status
- Link sparks further debate on upland farming with the publication of *Farming the Uplands in the Next Millennium* and proposals for an Upland Pilot Scheme to support the environment as well as rural businesses

## 1998

- A year of campaigning for wildlife and countryside law reform - an Early Day Motion supporting David Lepper MP's Wildlife Bill, including many of Link's 'asks', is signed by over half of all MPs. Link holds a seminar on the Government's proposals for greater access to the countryside and is united behind the need for new legislation
- Link conference raises awareness of the effects of endocrine disrupting chemicals in the marine environment
- Link publishes a statement of principles for ways the aggregate planning system should work as part of the Government's proposals to revise Mineral Planning Guidance (MPG6)

## 1999

- Link becomes a company limited by guarantee
- Devolution of many aspects of Government responsibility, including the environment, to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- Government announces over £1.5bn in funding over 7 years for the English Rural Development Plan
- After Government announces a Countryside and Rights of Way Bill in the Queen's speech, Link is awarded the Green Ribbon Political Award for its three-year wildlife reform campaign
- Link publishes its vision for *A Modern Planning System for Wildlife and Countryside* and sets ten tests to shape the drafting of a revised MPG6

# A new future for forestry

Link's Forestry Group was particularly active in the mid-1980s to the late 1990s. Its collective approach was crucial in countering the trenchant voice of the forest industry's lobby on economic timber production and a positive force in negotiations and formal agreement with the industry over certification.

The Forestry Commission's Broadleaves' Review in 1985 and amendments to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1985 that gave the Forestry Commission a new duty to take account of environmental issues, marked a turning point in post-war forestry policy. There was no longer an overwhelming emphasis on timber production through afforestation with exotic conifers as the main purpose for forestry in the UK.

Early in its life Link focused on the devastating environmental impacts of a tax regime that encouraged conifer afforestation, most notoriously on the environmentally sensitive Flow Country in Scotland. Later, in an influential report *Future Forestry* published in 1992, Link set out a vision for a new forestry strategy for Great Britain based on a balanced environmental, social and economic agenda.

Link's opposition to the privatisation of the Forestry Commission's estate mooted in the Forestry Review of 1993 helped to bring into focus the wider public benefits of the national forest estate for public access and wildlife. Its campaign for a national strategy based on delivering public benefits rather than solely on timber production led to the UK Forestry Accord in 1996 and the England Forestry Strategy in 1998 which rejected the idea of single purpose plantations once and for all.

The other main element of Link's work was on independent certification of sustainable forest management. A Link delegation representing environmental and social interests helped to create the ground-breaking UK Woodland Assurance Scheme - a voluntarily agreed standard for sustainable forest management - negotiated with the forestry industry in 1999.

Forestry has been a constant theme for Link throughout its history. Today, due to considerable policy advances in recent years, forestry is no longer seen as a priority area for many Link members. This may change in the future now that the forestry agenda is moving from one focused on protection and management to one focused on expansion as a mitigation and adaptation response to the increasingly urgent climate change agenda.

**Dr Hilary Allison**  
Woodland Trust & Chair of Link, 2003 - 2007



Stag beetle © Buglife/Gregory R Hitchcock



Dormouse © Danny Green (rsfb-images.com)

Bluebell woodland © www.northeastwildlife.co.uk



Panther cap © www.northeastwildlife.co.uk

# The second major campaign

## uniting the right to roam with safeguards for wildlife

“ Link has enabled interests in landscape, access and nature to work together to our mutual benefit, particularly on common land and coastal access ”

Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary, Open Spaces Society



© Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)



© David Tipling (rspb-images.com)

By far Link's largest campaign before the millennium came after 16 years of frustration as important wildlife habitats continued to be lost and damaged because of inadequate and weak legislation. In the end the nature of the campaign was very different to that in 1981.

In the early 1990s individual organisations in Link were campaigning to close loopholes in the laws protecting biodiversity in the UK. The issue was being kept in the headlines and there were sporadic victories but a major breakthrough still eluded conservationists. In 1996, during the climax of the campaign to stop the proposed Newbury Bypass being built across three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Tony Juniper, then Campaigns Director of Friends of the Earth, took on the role of Chair of the Link legislation group. Link's aim was to ensure the enactment of new laws that would help prevent the further loss of wildlife.

Lobbying of political parties prior to the general election of 1997 meant that the party destined to form the next Government, the Labour Party, had committed itself in its manifesto to better protection of wildlife - coded language for new SSSI law. The issue this time was not if legislation would be passed but when and in what form.

Soon after the election, Link launched its 'Wildlife Charter' and embarked on a massive campaign to underline the urgency of the situation. For the first time, a large number, rather than small groupings, of Link's member bodies came together to organise diverse activities, ranging from a mass rally in the House of Commons - covered on prime-time TV news bulletins - to the presentation of a quarter of a million signatures to 10 Downing Street.

The huge amount of effort and resources paid off. In its manifesto the new Government had also pledged to legislate on its long-held desire to open up access for the general public to more of the countryside - the so-called 'right to roam'. The Government decided to combine both access and wildlife proposals and, in the Queen's Speech in 1999, announced the introduction of a bill.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Bill provided a great test of the Link 'family'. Increased access to the countryside could potentially pose a threat to wildlife, disturbing breeding birds and eroding sensitive wildlife habitats. Opponents of the Bill would exploit such divisions. The Link process, however, was up to it, providing a confidential forum in which negotiations between Link's countryside and wildlife interests could continue - out of the limelight. Mutual respect between the two sides developed and a united position in support of increased access but with wildlife safeguards was reached and universally backed by all Link members.

During this highly successful campaign there was, importantly, no loss of identity for member organisations along the way and Link was able to galvanise public support for new countryside laws using its highly flexible and adaptive mechanisms for collective work to exceptionally good effect.

**Postscript:** A further piece of legislation was needed before the right to roam around the English coast was finally granted almost a decade later.



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# OOS

“ If Link did not exist, we would have to invent it. Without Link, we would not have comprehensive marine legislation or better protection for our finest wildlife sites ”

Dr Mike Clarke, Chief Executive, RSPB

South West Coast Path © National Trust

## 2000

- Link pressure helps change EU rules banning field margins wider than 2m saving miles of Britain's hedgerows
- The challenges and opportunities presented by rural development planning at the national and regional level is the focus of the Link paper, "The Rural Development Regulation - fulfilling the promise"
- Link work on green taxes receives mixed response - Government abandons plans for a fuel tax escalator and pesticides tax but announces the introduction of an aggregate levy

## 2001

- Link logo is redesigned and a new identity launched
- Launch of *Marine Charter* - a call for reform of the management and protection of our seas
- *Greenprint*, a 10 point action plan for agri-environment schemes in England and the co-ordination, of a Green Group stakeholder meeting with the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food are just two highlights in a busy Link year tackling the agricultural agenda
- Links across the UK issue a joint agenda for change in land use planning ahead of a Government Green Paper

## 2002

- The World Summit on Sustainable Development is held in Johannesburg
- Aggregates Levy and Sustainability Fund is introduced following pressure from Link's Minerals Sub Group
- After a postcard campaign urging the Prime Minister to fund implementation of the Curry Report, the Government announces a new strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food
- Link successfully campaigns to secure greater protection for many species through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species

## 2003

- A Biodiversity Task Force is established by Link to pick up the reins of the Biodiversity 'Challenge' Group
- Link co-ordinates input into the debate on Government proposals to modernise delivery of its rural policies, including the establishment of a new 'integrated' agency
- Link secures better protection of freshwater habitats through amendments to the Water Act 2003

## 2004

- Water guidance reflects Link pressure on water pricing with OFWAT including over £3.25bn for environmental improvements and nearly £0.5 million for nature conservation
- Sustainable development is a key part of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as a result of a Link campaign
- *Sustaining Biodiversity - revitalising the BAP process* is launched by Peter Ainsworth MP, Chairman of the Environment Select Committee and Environment Minister, Ben Bradshaw MP

## 2005

- Link becomes a registered charity
- General Election party manifestos contain promises to legislate on the marine environment and a draft Marine Bill is included in the legislative programme for the new Parliamentary session
- A new Environmental Stewardship Scheme which Link helped develop is introduced and includes Entry Level Stewardship allowing nearly all farmed land in England to be entered into agri-environment schemes
- Planning Policy Statement on Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9) is published following public consultation, incorporating many of Link's key concerns

## 2006

- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act becomes law and Natural England is born
- Kate Barker's Review of Land Use Planning in England sparks another round of reform for the planning system
- Pro-whaling nations become the majority members of the International Whaling Commission for the first time in decades prompting Link to redouble its efforts to maintain the moratorium on commercial whaling
- Forward Planning Review reveals that Link is well respected for providing 'credible and valuable contribution' to policy development via its 'collective intellect and participant engagement'

## 2007

- Link puts forward an Early Day Motion (EDM 145) calling for a Marine Bill and the Queen's Speech announces the publication of a draft Marine Bill
- The UK Biodiversity Action Plan list of priority species and habitats is launched, with significant input from Link and its members
- Link publishes its first annual progress assessment of Countdown 2010, the campaign to halt biodiversity loss by 2010, calling on Government to stop the rot, protect the best and restore the rest
- Link takes on the Secretariat role for the Blueprint for Water coalition's work on the 10 steps towards sustainable water use by 2015

## 2008

- A new Planning Act becomes law and the Marine and Coastal Access Bill is introduced to Parliament
- Link launches its policy perspective on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) *Beyond the Pillars*, calling for a European Sustainable Land Management Policy
- After heavy lobbying, Link is disappointed with the Government's decision not to include non-native species on the Bird Registration Scheme
- Link welcomes the Government's decision not to issue licenses to cull badgers in England
- Defra adopts a number of Blueprint for Water recommendations in its *Future Water* policy document which later forms the Floods and Water Management Bill
- Decision by European Union to set a 0% rate of set-aside comes in to force in the UK

## 2009

- Marine and Coastal Access Act becomes law. Lobbying by Link delivers provisions for the designation of an ecologically coherent network of marine protected sites
- Government backs down on its plans to introduce a regulatory budgets system, a move called for and welcomed by Link
- Link welcomes Natural England's decision to develop new conservation approaches with a draft Ecosystems Approach policy, but raises concerns with the lack of available research evidence
- Link fails to thwart the Government opting for a voluntary approach to the replacement of set-aside
- Members develop Link's first 3 - 5 year strategy for 2010 onwards



Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

# Campaigning for the countryside

It may have taken 11 years for Wildlife Link officially to marry its Countryside partner but the two have depended on each other throughout Link's life. One of Link's great strengths lies in its diversity and nowhere has this been more true than in connecting the wildlife and countryside agendas. Bringing together the different approaches and constituencies has not been without its challenges and even finding a common language has been difficult at times. But together the wildlife and countryside voice has been stronger than apart. On issues ranging from hedgerows and National Parks through historic and coastal landscapes to rural development and farming policy Link has played an important, sometimes central, role in shaping the rural debate. Perhaps most importantly, however, Link has shown how any serious attempt to improve the way we look after the natural world requires us to look at the bigger picture, join up our thinking and challenge comfortable organisational and professional silos even within ourselves. Soon it will be unthinkable not to develop policy and manage our land and coast with a view to promoting access, landscape and wildlife together and we can thank Link for helping pioneer the path.

**Tony Burton**  
Chair of Link, 2000 - 2003



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# Beyond the Pillars

There can be little doubt that the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) successfully delivered its aim of increasing food production. However, this success came at a price. As the productive capacity of Europe's countryside increased, the quality of its environment diminished. Eventually, the countryside of the UK also became subject to the influence of the CAP and Link's member organisations began their long campaign to reform the CAP into a positive influence on the environment.

As with most of Link's long campaigns, the baton has been passed to many campaigners over the years. Step by step the CAP has undergone significant changes and Link can be proud of the important role it has played in its transformation. But there is still a long way to go to reform a policy that is unsure whether it is an income support payment or an incentive to farm in an environmentally sensitive way. The CAP continues to deliver around 80% of its funding to around 20% of farmers, many of whom may not need support to remain economically viable.

Once again a major debate is underway about our future supplies of food. Even before this debate resurfaced, Link was thinking about the future, aware of the inevitable pressures that will be brought to bear on our natural resources in the decades ahead. Our vision for the CAP, *Beyond the Pillars*, calls for its greatest evolution of all - to become a European Sustainable Land Management Policy, resourced with the means to tackle the complex environmental challenges Europe will face in the century ahead.

To succeed will mean making some compromises, both economically and environmentally. We must not go back to the 'farming versus environment' barricades or inefficiently shuffle valuable funding between policy measures that effectively seek to deliver the same outcome - a productive but sustainable countryside. Instead farmers, environmentalists, politicians and policy makers across Europe will have to work collectively to find a way of integrating our demand for food with the need to protect our environmental assets

*Beyond the Pillars* advocates a simple approach to help achieve this vision. Link's member organisations will continue to campaign until the people of Europe have a policy that ensures we have sustainable supplies of food and a high quality natural environment for all.

**Ian Woodhurst**  
CPRE and Chair of Farming & Rural Development Group,  
2006 - 2009



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# NERC Act 2006

## seeking better rural delivery and biodiversity protection



Cambourne © Matthew Roberts



Tree survey © The Landmark Practice



Reed cutting © Chris Gomersall (rsfb-images.com)

**The Biodiversity Duty** “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.” Section 40, NERC Act 2006

Over the years, the development and passage of environmental legislation has provided focus for Link’s activities, whether promoting enhancements, or defending past gains. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 was no exception. It set out to improve rural delivery: streamlining funding and support, eliminating overlap between organisations, devolving responsibilities to rural people and businesses. The cornerstone of these plans was the merger of English Nature, the Countryside Agency and Defra’s Rural Development Service into a single integrated agency, that later became Natural England.

A central theme in the development of the Bill was whether the proposed agency should contribute to the environmental leg of sustainable development, or whether the agency would itself deliver sustainable development. Link members feared that the latter would lead to environmental compromises and we argued that any trade offs between environmental, social and economic benefits should be made openly with full consideration by all relevant parties, not solely by a single agency .

Link members were delighted when Government concluded that “working with partners”, the new body would be responsible for “protecting, managing and enhancing the natural environment in all its guises, especially biodiversity and landscape, while seeking to deliver social and economic benefits through its championing of the environment.”

Given the role this integrated agency would have in championing protected areas against damaging developments, Link also lobbied for the Bill to include a requirement for biodiversity to be factored in to all public policy and decision making. Legislation was enacted requiring public bodies to “have regard to” the conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. Pleased though we were by the inclusion of this measure, Link pressed hard for the clause to be strengthened by replacing “have regard to” with “to further ”, in the belief that this would help public bodies take a more active role in redressing biodiversity loss, but we were not successful.

Throughout this process, Link members contributed their wide experience to the debate on what constituted better rural delivery and how to recognise, promote and spread it amongst all involved - rural communities, land managers, NGO ’s, local and central government and its agencies. With the challenge of reducing public expenditure, nailing what constitutes the best in rural delivery seems as relevant now as it did then.

**Gwyn Williams**  
RSPB & Deputy Chair of Link, 2002 - 2004

# Saving our seas

## The third major campaign

The seas around the UK are among the most productive and wildlife-rich on Earth. However, over the centuries they have been taken for granted and regarded as a limitless resource. Fragile habitats have been destroyed, once-common species are now on the brink of extinction, fish stocks have collapsed and marine resources have been depleted. Less than 0.001% of our seas are currently fully protected from all damaging activities.

Link, together with our sister Link organisations, spent a decade campaigning for comprehensive marine legislation to protect our seas and were delighted that the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act finally reached the statute books in November 2009. With the Act we now have a fantastic opportunity to manage our seas sustainably, to protect marine ecosystems and allow them to recover and thrive again.

The first task in Link's campaign was simply to get the marine environment registering on the 'political radar'. Once this was achieved, the challenge was to see the country's richest biodiversity asset fully protected and recognised in decisions about the future developments in our seas. Campaigning focussed on increasing public awareness and on moving marine policy thinking forward. Link briefed parliamentarians, provided suggestions for parliamentary questions and campaigned for MPs' support for motions in Parliament. Perhaps our biggest success was securing cross party support for the Marine Bill in the early years and ensuring that all the main parties committed to this in their General Election party manifestos.

Once the support for a Marine Bill was achieved, Link focussed on developing our policy on the content of the Bill and ensuring civil servants and other stakeholders understood what our priorities were. At the same time we needed to keep reminding politicians that Link and its membership still wanted a Marine Bill and that there was both public desire and a need for action.

In the final stages, as the Bill passed through Parliament, Link was extremely influential, successfully encouraging cross-party MPs and Peers to support our proposed amendments. As a result, we secured several positive changes to the Bill to benefit marine biodiversity.

Getting the Act took time. The Marine Bill was the most consulted upon Bill that Link has ever worked on. However, what at times seemed like over-scrutinization has delivered a large and wide-ranging Act. The challenge now is to ensure the Act is implemented swiftly and effectively to deliver healthy well-managed seas, where wildlife is flourishing and ecosystems are protected, connected and thriving.

**Joan Edwards**  
The Wildlife Trusts & Chair of Marine Campaign, 2006 - present



Cross-party support at Link's marine lobby 2005 © WCL



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Kate Humble & Environment Secretary Hilary Benn MP at Link's Marine Act celebration 2009 © WCL

© Paul Naylor (www.marinephoto.co.uk)

# A message from the Chair

## three wishes for natural friends and real leaders



Paul de Zylva 2010 © WCL

Co-operation - it seems everyone is at it.

Link deals unashamedly in co-operation. It's as natural and as strong as competition and in good or bad times it is often the best way ahead.

Link infuses our members' unity of

thought and purpose to speak truth to power. We keep it real by saying to anyone of any rank what it takes to create a sustainable society and so avoid the double-trouble of our natural world and common climate being denuded by what currently passes for progress.

The testimonies in this 'birthday card' to Link show how it has grown into a thirty year old worth knowing - cooperative, fun to be with, trustworthy, and a great listener who is also friend enough to challenge.

Governments, like birthdays, come and go. They tend to excel at putting off being decisive on environment, conservation and welfare concerns until it is too late and just before

the 'next lot' sweep in, often following election campaigns emitting more heat than light.

Why procrastinate when you can perendinate (put off until the day after tomorrow)? On Link's 25th anniversary my predecessor, Hilary Allison, wrote:

*'Government action has only recently caught up with last century's thinking. A new agenda is needed to move environmental policy forward. Link needs to be ready to play its part, to set the agenda and to meet the challenge of the next twenty five years.'*

Hilary's words hold true, apart from there being five fewer years to play with. Link, with its first ever 3-5 year strategy in place is ready to meet Hilary's challenge - just in time for a new administration which promises to be the 'greenest government ever'.

Let's raise a full-throated cheer for Link and, with fun and sobriety in equal measure, offer three wishes for the next five years. You can add yours to my two offerings and then keep this wish-list and swish the official tick-box provided when you realise a wish has been granted.

Paul de Zylva  
Chair of Link, 2007 - present

### Wish 1: Real leaders, please

Bring us the politicians and civil servants who, because they are taking decisive action now, no longer write or make speeches containing perendinatory remarks such as, "these are the most important long term issues we face"

### Wish 2: Speeches worth hearing

Bring us a Prime Minister who makes a 'green' speech once a month not once a year and requires the same of their Ministers. Better still simply let them integrate all such thinking into their daily speeches on the economy, society, everyday life.

### Wish 3: My own wish for 2010-15...

## From Partners & Funders

“ Wildlife and Countryside Link has made an invaluable contribution to Government over the last 30 years. It has worked constructively in partnership with Government on several key policy areas including the England Biodiversity Strategy and the Marine and Coastal Access Act, which have benefited enormously from the advice, support and wealth of expertise provided by Link and its member organisations. The co-ordination provided by Link is particularly beneficial to Government, enabling it to engage with and obtain the views of a large number of key stakeholders through one gateway. We congratulate Link on 30 years of successful partnership working and look forward to continuing to work together on protecting and enhancing our biodiversity and natural environment. ”

Richard Benyon MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment and Fisheries

“ Natural England congratulates Link on its 30th anniversary in this, the International Year of Biodiversity. We join them in celebrating the work of their members, voluntary bodies working tirelessly to protect our countryside, our seas and our wildlife. We are pleased to have been able to support the partnership that Link represents, not least in a time when collaboration between statutory and non-statutory organisations becomes ever more important. We look forward to building on our relationship to better conserve and enhance our important biodiversity in the future. ”

Dr Helen Phillips  
Chief Executive, Natural England

“ We work with Link and its members to identify, secure and maintain environmental improvements for wildlife and people. We congratulate Link on its 30th anniversary and look forward to achieving further successes together in the future. ”

Paul Leinster  
Chief Executive, Environment Agency

“ You can't solve big problems in isolation; nor can you solve them working in isolation. The great achievement of Link has been in seeking the joined up solution, bringing diverse organisations together to address the Big problems in a coordinated and systematic way. We are proud to have been able to support Link's essential work and although the biggest challenges still lie ahead, Link has already achieved some very important victories. ”

René Olivieri  
Chair, The Tubney  
Charitable Trust

European badger  
© Danny Green  
(rspb-images.com)



Whooper swans © www.northwestwildlife.co.uk

# From past Directors & Chairs

"I had a baptism of fire when I started working for Link in the autumn of 1982. On my first day I was surprised to learn that Link was to become independent of its parent body - CoEnCo - and would be moving offices. It was a time when the NGOs had flexed their muscles by working together on the passage of the landmark Wildlife and Countryside Bill. It showed what could be achieved by working together."

I found the influencing process - getting a glimpse of politics and government from behind the scenes fascinating. I also loved the communication and networking involved to keep the wheels of Link flowing. All these experiences have stayed with me. Looking back it was one of my most enjoyable jobs bringing me into contact with a wide range of organisations and personalities."

**Hazel Phillips**  
Secretary of Wildlife Link, 1982 - 1986

"I was secretary of Countryside Link from 1989-1992, just before the formation of Wildlife and Countryside Link. Countryside Link was formed to enable landscape, access and heritage bodies to meet the Countryside Commission at senior level, and we benefited from a frank exchange of views. It then broadened out to provide a facility for joint working with a range of bodies - an excellent precursor to WCL."

**Kate Ashbrook**  
Secretary of Countryside Link, 1989 - 1992

"Link was my first proper job and turned out to be a much more of a life changing experience than I could ever have expected. I met some of the most charismatic and doggedly determined campaigners in the world, as well as experienced leaders, and learnt about organisations, change and diplomacy the direct way. This was invaluable for my subsequent roles. Most vitally it armed me with the confidence to take on the challenge of heading up The Wildlife Trusts whose bottom-up federal nature is not dissimilar to Link's. I look back on my days at Link with fondness and with some remarkable experiences of human nature and passion about our cause etched clearly on my mind."

**Stephanie Hilborne OBE**  
Principal Officer of Link, 1995 - 1997

"Link is epitomised by the adage that 'we are greater than the sum of our component parts'. It revels in the diversity of its members and this is what underpins its advocacy success. Since leaving Link in 1999, I have continued to contribute to and benefit from Link's activity either while at one of the smaller organisations, Plantlife, or while working for the RSPB. Link provides a unique service that we, and I would argue Government, cannot do without. Happy Birthday, Link and here's to the next 30 years."

**Martin Harper**  
Principal Officer of Link, 1997 - 1999

"Link made me believe that significant change was possible if you were focused, learned how to play the system and didn't give up. This now keeps me going when I feel overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge that is climate change. Link also improved my dinner party conversation as I often proudly claimed that 'harassing dolphins' was now illegal thanks in part to my efforts. Link introduced me to fabulously talented and committed people and gave me a unique introduction to the environmental sector and the many complex issues we are trying to address. Without it I may well have remained an unhappy fundraiser rather than an exhausted but never defeated campaigner for change."

**Bryony Worthington**  
Principal Officer of Link, 1999 - 2002

"I greatly value the time when I was Director of Link, I saw for real what it means for NGOs to be 'more than the sum of their parts'. Most of Link's work is in the background, informing, negotiating, editing joint responses, but without it, many high profile joint campaigns would not have been successful. Link's anniversary is a great time to recognise and celebrate what is a small but very effective organisation, and I hope Link continues to be effective for many years to come."

**Pippa Langford**  
Director of Link, 2002 - 2004

"For almost all my career in the environment Link has been a constant companion providing an essential corporate voice for the millions of people that NGOs represent"

**Phil Rothwell**  
Acting Chair of Link, 1997

"My time at Link was an incredibly rewarding one. Getting to know the inner workings of Link was challenging, but I soon found comfort in the support of all our members and staff. There was always a willingness and desire for everyone to work together, no matter how difficult the issue. Attempting to get consensus on policy issues should not be underestimated, and I learnt to be resilient and to enjoy both the large and small victories."

**Alexia Wellbelove**  
Director of Link, 2004 - 2008

"Link represents best practice in environmental NGOs working together through identifying common interests, open debate, information sharing, policy analysis and ultimately in presenting an expert, thoughtful and united view to Government. It's democratic, extremely well facilitated and lean. I was particularly aware of the responsibility of trying to ensure Link serves all of its members equally. Link's staff, representatives and trustees can't be single minded visionaries wanting to stamp their own vision on the world of conservation for their own personal gain; Link is the sector in genuinely and fruitful collaboration mode."

**Dr Hilary Allison**  
Chair of Link, 2003 - 2007

"Link has been at the heart of rural policy thinking - cajoling, encouraging and demonstrating the need to think more carefully about the future of our rural landscape and recognise the public passion for its protection."

**Tony Burton**  
Chair of Link, 2000 - 2003

"In a world full of conflicting agendas and a myriad of confusing approaches there are some extremely powerful forces at work when organisations like Greenpeace, Plantlife International and National Trust gang up and get on the same page as all the other members of Link. Such a grown up approach from such diverse organisations is compelling and influential, and has real impact on those on the receiving end of the message."

**Dr Jane Smart**  
Chair of Link, 1996 - 1997

# Wildlife and Countryside Link

## Personnel

### Wildlife Committee - Council for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo)

**Chair**  
Lord Melchett 1980 - 1982

**Secretaries**  
Sally Owen 1981 - 1982  
Hazel Phillips 1982

### Wildlife Link

**Chairs**  
Lord Melchett 1982 - 1988  
Lord Ross 1988 - 1991  
Lord Moran 1991 - 1992

**Secretaries**  
Hazel Phillips 1982 - 1986  
Jill Oliver 1987 - 1988  
Peter Macdonald 1988 - 1992

### Countryside Link

**Chairs**  
Alan Mattingly 1982 - 1989  
Andrew Purkis 1988 - 1992  
Alan Mattingly 1992 - 1993

**Secretaries**  
Fiona Reynolds 1982 - 1989  
Kate Ashbrook 1989 - 1992

### Wildlife and Countryside Link

**Chairs**  
Lord Moran 1993 - 1995  
Dr Jane Smart 1995 - 1997  
Phil Rothwell 1997  
Chris Butler-Stroud 1997 - 2000  
Tony Burton 2000 - 2003  
Hilary Allison 2003 - 2007  
Paul de Zylva 2007 - present

**Principal Officers / Directors**  
Peter Macdonald 1993 - 1994  
Stephanie Hilborne 1994 - 1997  
Martin Harper 1997 - 1999  
Bryony Worthington 1999 - 2002  
Pippa Langford 2002 - 2004  
Alexia Wellbelove 2004 - 2008  
Jodie Bettis 2008 - present



Barn owl © www.northeastwildlife.co.uk

# From Link members

"As a small organisation Link provides us with both a valuable means of being kept informed and an effective conduit for making our views heard."

**Dr Tony Gent, Chief Executive, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust**

"Link provides a friendly interdisciplinary forum for sharing information and knowledge, creating synergy - turning joined up thinking into joined up action and experience into policy."

**Arlin Rickard, Director, Association of Rivers Trusts**

"Link gives us a stronger voice to influence government through joined up working with other NGOs and provides valuable updates on cutting edge conservation issues."

**Julia Hanmer, Chief Executive, Bat Conservation Trust**

"Link has enabled us to broaden our understanding and influence of new legislation and has strengthened our relationships with a wide range of conservation bodies."

**Dave Turnbull, Chief Executive, British Mountaineering Council**

"Link keeps us informed, avoids us duplicating effort and helps us to promote policies that benefit thousands of invertebrate species."

**Matt Shardlow, Chief Executive, Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust**

"Our partnership with Link allows us to make well-informed input into crucial policy issues that would otherwise be difficult for a small NGO."

**Dr Martin Warren, Chief Executive, Butterfly Conservation**

"Link has proved invaluable as a means of sharing policy intelligence, debating the issues and, where necessary, presenting a united front to decision-makers."

**Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive, Campaign to Protect Rural England**

"Through Link we can join with other environmental NGOs to sustain the historic dimension of the environment for the benefit of all."

**Dr Mike Heyworth, Chief Executive, Council for British Archaeology**

"The remarkable and unique Link partnership facilitates organisations to share expertise and experience, influence governments' policies and achieve their common goals."

**Jennifer Lonsdale, Director, Environmental Investigation Agency**

"In the NGO ecosystem, Link is the essential service provider. Members large and small benefit from Link's safe house, honest broker approach and its campaigning edge."

**Andy Atkins, Chief Executive, Friends of the Earth**

"Link encourages and demonstrates the need to be alert, keeping environment and climate high on the political agenda and strengthening relationships between its members."

**Linda Matthews, General Manager, Hawk and Owl Trust**

"Link makes the links that matter for animal welfare and conservation. IFAW is proud to be a member."

**Robbie Marsland, Executive Director UK, International Fund for Animal Welfare**

"Link is invaluable as it helps us connect with what other organisations are doing and keeps us up to date with environmental policy development and implementation."

**Marina Pacheco, Chief Executive, The Mammal Society**

"Link helps us influence Government through the sharing of information and expertise and by enabling us to unite with others around a common goal."

**Sam Fanshawe, Director, Marine Conservation Society**

"Link provides a catalyst for wildlife and countryside organisations to work together - it's a great forum to explore ideas and mutually beneficial partnerships."

**Dame Fiona Reynolds, Director General, The National Trust**

"Plantlife is stronger, more effective and better able to influence those whose decisions affect the environment for wild plants because of our membership of Link."

**Victoria Chester, Chief Executive, Plantlife International**

"We are a small organisation, but with a lot to say. Link was vital in helping us get priority status for ponds in the UK BAP"

**Dr Jeremy Biggs, Director, Pond Conservation**

"My organisation does a lot but it can't do everything. Link is very effective at helping us get our message into areas we wouldn't otherwise easily reach."

**Mark Watts, Chief Executive, RSPCA**

"Membership of Link is invaluable. Link ensures awareness of and facilitates informed contribution to vital policy issues, providing a professional, united front for wildlife NGOs."

**Ali Hood, Director of Conservation, Shark Trust**

"Link has prevented us tripping over one another and enabled us to present a united force on key conservation issues over the last 30 years."

**Stephanie Hilbourne OBE, Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts**

"Being a member of Link has helped the Trust make the transition to a campaigning body through shared knowledge, mutual support and co-ordinated action."

**Sue Holden, Chief Executive, The Woodland Trust**

"Link provides a positive forum for NGOs to come together to support each other and provides a powerful platform for action on important environmental issues."

**David Nussbaum, Chief Executive, WWF-UK**

"Link is a genuine partnership. No single member owns it. It provides an inclusive forum for sharing views and knowledge resulting in a powerful voice for conservation."

**Martin Spray, Chief Executive, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust**

"Link helps us communicate about the walking environment with other environmental groups, and enables us to collaborate with others on shared interests."

**Tom Franklin, Chief Executive, The Ramblers**

"Link provides an ideal forum for environmental organisations to reach consensus and produce high quality policy statements that exert genuine influence over decision makers."

**Paul Knight, Chief Executive, Salmon & Trout Association**



Wildlife and Countryside Link is the umbrella body for voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife, countryside and the marine environment. Our members practise and advocate environmentally sensitive land management and food production and encourage respect for and enjoyment of natural landscapes and features, the historic environment and biodiversity. Taken together, our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK and manage over 690,000 hectares of land.

**Current policy areas**

**Agriculture**

**Water**

**Biodiversity**

**Land Use Planning**

**Marine Legislation**

**Whales**

**Wildlife Trade**

“ Bringing voluntary organisations in the UK together to protect and enhance wildlife and landscape and to further the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside ”

Wildlife and  
Countryside

**LINK** 

**Wildlife and Countryside Link**

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