

Wildlife and
Countryside

LINK



Wildlife and Countryside Link

(A company limited by guarantee)

Company number: 03889519

Annual Report 2015

The Trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the year ended 31 December 2015.

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A Message from Link's Chair

I am delighted to introduce Link Trustees' Annual Report which highlights our achievements in the last year and our exciting future plans.

Link's Strategy 2015-19 sets an ambitious but deliverable vision and direction for the organisation. Welcomed by our members, it recognises the need to adapt and evolve to an ever-changing internal and external environment. In so doing, we are continuing to provide a powerful and credible collective voice for the natural environment, delivering value for our members and securing our future financial resilience.

A key strategic objective is to increase our impact and influence by working more effectively with members and we achieved this through many initiatives. These included the joint Parliamentary launch of our visions [Water Matters](#) and [Farming Fit for the Future](#), and working with sister Links across the UK in bringing together 100 voluntary organisations to warn of the potential threat posed by deregulating the European Union's Birds and Habitats Directives.

We realised that we needed to improve the ways we communicate with our members and key decision-makers. In 2015, with a grant from the Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation, we created the new post of Communications Manager. In post since April, Sarah Bernard has transformed Link's communications and enhanced impact and influence for both Link and its member organisations. Achievements have included securing significant media coverage for key campaigns, such as Farming Fit for the Future and recognising the value of Brownfield sites, along with delivering a great new Link web site.

Towards the end of 2015, a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation enabled us to restructure the staff team to ensure we have the skills and competences to effectively deliver added value for members, and maximise our collective impact and influence. Link's new structure enables us to draw on a huge range of relevant skills and experiences to add real value to the collaborative work of our members in much more integrated and strategic ways. Change can bring uncertainty and we appreciate members' support and patience.

I am pleased to report that our finances continue to be in good shape and I would like to thank our 46 members whose subscriptions represent a significant proportion of our unrestricted income. In line with our ambition to diversify our sources of income, we are also grateful for financial support from a number of charitable trusts who share our enthusiasm and ambition for Link: the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the John Ellerman Foundation and the Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation. David Lind, our Honorary Treasurer, plays a huge role in keeping Link's finances in good order and we are indebted to his commitment and expertise.

Looking ahead, there are significant opportunities for Link. Defra's development of 25 year plans for Food and Farming and the Environment provide important chances to shape long term policy direction and we are looking at developing a small number of overarching campaigns drawing on the expertise of all our members. We also need to improve our own structures to ensure transparency and openness, and this will be achieved with a governance review.

Link is very fortunate to benefit from a talented staff team, led by Link's Director, Elaine King, an engaged and experienced Board of Trustees, a committed membership and supportive funders, all of whom make a huge contribution to Link's work. Our natural systems are under increasing pressures and it has never been more important for all those who care about them to work effectively together. I truly believe we can achieve far more collectively and that Link's impact demonstrates the value of working in partnership.

Dr Hazel Norman
Chair

Reference and Administrative Details

Link Trustees

Hazel Norman, Chair (appointed 2 July 2015)
Amy Coyte, Chair (resigned 31 May 2015)
Paul Miner, Deputy Chair (appointed 9 December 2015)
David Lind, Treasurer
Chris Butler-Stroud, Trustee (appointed 24 June 2015)
Marcus Gilleard, Trustee (appointed 24 June 2015)
Nicola Hutchinson, Trustee
Nikki Williams, Trustee
Stephen Trotter, Trustee (appointed 24 June 2015)

Company Registered Number

03889519

Charity Registered Number

1107460

Principal Office Address

89 Albert Embankment
Vauxhall
London
SE1 7TP

Company Secretary and Director

Dr Elaine King

Independent Examiner

John Speed
JS2 Limited
One Crown Square
Woking
Surrey
GU21 6HR

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank
PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

Nationwide International
5-11 St George's Street
Douglas
Isle of Man
IM99 1RN

Solicitors

Russell-Cooke Solicitors
2 Putney Hill
London
SW15 6AB

Objectives and Activities

Our objectives and strategy

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is a unique coalition of 46 voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife and the countryside. Our members practise and advocate environmentally sensitive land management, and encourage respect for and enjoyment of natural landscapes and features, the historic and marine environment and biodiversity. Our vision is 'to secure and shape a healthy, enhanced and accessible natural world'. Link wants England's wildlife sites to comprise a coherent and resilient ecological network, on land and at sea.

Our charitable objective is to promote the conservation and protection of wildlife and the countryside for the benefit of the public. Since 1980, we have been doing this by facilitating collaboration between voluntary organisations in the UK. We work with our members, and others, to embrace a new, restorative approach which rebuilds nature and creates a more resilient natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and people.

How do we achieve our charitable objectives?

- By addressing a range of policy issues through managing specific working groups
- Convening meetings with statutory conservation agencies, ministers, Government officials and other stakeholders
- Preparing and advocating key policy messages across the membership
- Organising events such as seminars and conferences on specific policy areas
- Facilitating exchange of information and ideas between members
- Representing Link and its members to external bodies including Government and other stakeholders

We began to implement our ambitious five-year strategy in 2015, within which we recognise the need to adapt and evolve in response to a changing political and financial environment. Our ambition for Link is clear - to be a powerful, credible and effective voice for the natural environment, delivering influence and impact, while enhancing our delivery of clear added value to our members' work.

In order to realise our ambition for Link towards 2019, we are working to four strategic objectives. These strategic objectives form the framework for Link's enhanced approach:

- 1: Increase and focus Link's influence and impact**
- 2: Strengthen our network of relationships and communications**
- 3: Increase members' capacity and consolidate our membership**
- 4: Grow our capability and establish our financial resilience**

Throughout 2015, we began to build on and strengthen what is already good at Link, increasing our capacity and competence, and therefore enhancing our engagement, influence and impact with Government, while delivering even more added value for members.

We are also working to diversify our sources of income, to reduce dependence on members' subscriptions and donations. Our approach is to ensure that Link is financially sustainable in the long term, while maintaining our members at the heart of what we do and how we do it.

In October 2015, supported by a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, we restructured the Link staff team and created a number of new roles. The new team, led by Link's Director, Dr Elaine King, now comprises six highly capable individuals with the skills and competences necessary to deliver Link's strategy.

In delivering Link's four strategic objectives, the organisation's value to members is two-fold: delivering the leadership to support our members to have impact and influence at the highest level, while simultaneously providing a professional, highly skilled collaborative service to guide and support policy at the highest level.

How do we deliver these objectives?

- **Through leadership:**
 - Horizon scanning, gathering intelligence and proactively advising and supporting members
 - Developing networks of relationships which help us deliver impact for members
 - Delivering focused campaigns and advocacy messages that, when working together with members, will have the most impact, for example by implementing powerful 'set pieces' of work

- **Through support:**
 - Advising and supporting working groups which address a range of policy issues
 - Collaborating with members to develop strong and influential joint policies
 - Facilitating the sharing of information and intelligence
 - Providing an accessible and safe place for identifying and ironing-out tensions
 - Developing joint policies and advocacy plans

Public Benefit requirement

The Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link confirm that the organisation has Charitable Purposes pursuant to the Charities Act 2006. The Trustees believe that there are clear and identifiable public benefits arising from the pursuit of Wildlife and Countryside Link's aims and objectives, and that these benefits are freely available to the general public without restriction.

AGM and Annual Debate

Link's Annual General Meeting took place on 9 December 2015 at WWF-UK's Living Planet Centre, Woking. The day also included a meeting of group chairs and vice chairs, addressing achievements in 2015 and Link's priorities for 2016.

The AGM included an update on progress on delivering Link's 2015-2019 strategy. It also saw the appointment of Hazel Norman (Chief Executive at the British Ecological Society) as Link's Chair, Paul Miner (Planning Campaign Manager at the Campaign to Protect Rural England) as Link's Deputy Chair, and Chris Butler Stroud (Chief Executive at Whale and Dolphin Conservation), Marcus Gilleard (Senior External Affairs Advisor at the National Trust) and Stephen Trotter (Director of England, the Wildlife Trusts) as Ordinary Trustees. Following the AGM, Link hosted a debate entitled "In or Out of the EU: What is best for the natural environment?"

Link was pleased to welcome five different speakers to inform and engage the audience in a thought provoking and valuable debate leading up to a crucial point for the environment. The speakers were: David Baldock, Director at the Institute for European Environmental Policy; Dame Helen Ghosh, Director General at the National Trust; Baroness Kate Parminter, Deputy Leader in the Lords and Spokesperson on Environment and Rural Affairs; the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, former Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; and Laura Sandys, Chair of the European Movement UK and former MP for South Thanet.

Achievements and Performance

Our Impact

Throughout 2015 Link continued to present collective messages to those who have the capacity to bring about change - both in Government, and elsewhere. We also supported and facilitated collaborative working across Link's member organisations on a wide range of issues.

A large part of Link's work is managed and delivered through its working groups. In 2015 Link provided support for eleven groups on the following policy areas:

- Agriculture: Chair, Helen Perkins (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Ellie Crane (RSPB)
- Animal Welfare: Chair, Alyx Elliot (World Animal Protection); Vice Chair, Claire Bass (Humane Society International)
- Invasive Non-Native Species: Chair, Kay Haw (Woodland Trust)
- Joint Links Habitats and Birds: Chair, Kate Jennings (RSPB)
- Land Use Planning: Chair, Victoria Bankes-Price (Woodland Trust)
- Legal Strategy: Chair, Matt Shardlow (Buglife); Vice Chair, Carol Day (RSPB)
- Marine: Chair, Joan Edwards (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Melissa Moore (Marine Conservation Society)
- Blueprint for Water: Chair, Hannah Freeman (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust); Vice Chair, Hannah Blackburn (WWF-UK)
- Whales: Chair, Jenny Lonsdale (Environment Investigation Agency); Vice Chair, John Frizell (Greenpeace)
- Wildlife Trade: Chair, Heather Sohl (WWF-UK); Vice Chair, Tania McCrea-Steele (IFAW)
- 25 Year Plan for Nature: Chair, Paul Wilkinson (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Christine Reid (The Woodland Trust)

As in previous years, Link collaborated with members to produce collective statements, reports and other advocacy and campaigns activities. This included 23 consultation responses, eight press releases, and 12 monthly e-bulletins. Link also corresponded and held meetings with Ministers, MPs, civil servants, Commissioners, embassies and Ambassadors on a number of key issues throughout the year. Several meetings were held with Ministers across Defra and other Government departments and their Agencies, in addition to numerous meetings with key bodies such as Ofwat, the International Whaling Commission, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Marine Management Organisation and a range of water companies. Throughout this work, Link has strengthened the voice of the sector, increasing the impact for our members by gaining support from a wide range of organisations and engaging further with external agencies.

Link launched two key reports in September 2015; [Water Matters](#) and [Farming Fit for the Future](#). These publications set out a coherent, holistic approach for a future in which the natural environment underpins healthy farmland, rivers, lakes and wetlands in England. The reports call on the Government, businesses and wider society to do more to achieve this, and stress the willingness of Link and its members to work in partnership. The [Parliamentary launch](#) of the two publications, and a series of compelling case studies, brought together more than one hundred different stakeholders including farmers, water companies, MPs and voluntary organisations. Zac Goldsmith MP and the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, spoke at the event about the importance of taking an integrated approach. The event and the publications generated a great deal of positive interest, enabling Link and its members to continue conversations with Government and other interested parties to take forward our recommendations and shape a better environment.

Our work in collaboration with sister Links across the UK was also successful in advocating for the protection of Europe's natural environment. In May, 100 voluntary organisations across the UK, coordinated by Link with and on behalf of our sister Links, published a [position statement](#) warning that the European Commission's REFIT 'Fitness Check' of the Birds and Habitats Directives could be the single biggest threat to UK and European nature and biodiversity in a generation.

Throughout the campaign, Link members called on MEPs and MPs to defend the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, which provide vital protection for habitats and species. A public consultation from the European Commission was undertaken during the summer of 2015, which saw the unprecedented participation of 520,325 people, making it the largest ever response to an EU public consultation. With the support of the Joint Links network, over 100,000 signatories were from people of the UK, demonstrating their high regard for EU

action to safeguard nature. Following the work from Link and its members, at a key meeting on 16 December 2015, the UK Environment Minister Rory Stewart spoke up in support of the Directives, stating that, 'the UK like many other Member States...does not wish to renegotiate the Directives'. Notwithstanding many positive statements by Ministers across Member States, there is still a risk that the Directives might be opened. Link will continue this work into 2016 to ensure that the outcome of the 'Fitness Check' is positive for the natural environment.

A key element of Link's new strategy is to improve communications across all of our work. In this way, we can maximise our collective impact and influence on Government policy, while also delivering tangible benefits for both our members and stakeholders across the environment sector as a whole. Through a grant from the Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation, Link was able to introduce a new communications function to the team. Since April 2015, our Communications Manager has worked with member organisations to increase our shared impact and influence. This included setting up teams comprising communications colleagues from across member organisations to ensure the smooth and effective management of communications activity throughout our campaigns. For example, joint work with communications colleagues resulted in excellent media coverage as we launched our reports on agriculture and water. This included a feature on BBC Breakfast, naming Link alongside five member organisations, as well as articles across national and local media.

Similarly, Link's Communications Manager also worked with members to develop messaging for a joint sector voice on the threats to UK and European nature and biodiversity presented by proposed changes to the Nature Directives. A joint press release: '100 voluntary organisations unite to defend nature', worked effectively to strengthen all member organisations' individual communications and created a huge impact in the media, demonstrating Link's ability to promote the work of our members and highlighting the value of collaboration.

Link has also created a new, visually appealing and accessible website, with a strong campaigning voice. Launched in December, it has enabled members, and other organisations, to engage further with others to promote their ideas, through blogs and twitter functions on the site. One of the first blogs published raised concerns over the future of the National Wildlife Crime Unit. This achieved significant media attention, with Link and member organisations quoted in national media. Shortly after, the Government confirmed that funding would be available for the Unit for the next four years.

The Link team has also been empowered to embed communications throughout their work, resulting from ongoing training and advice from the Communications Manager. This has resulted in better awareness of Link's work through social media, and enhanced coverage for Link and its members across a variety of areas. The staff team coordinating and managing communications activity through Link's groups has also resulted in joint working with a wider range of colleagues in member organisations, such as public affairs and communications experts.

Link's Director similarly worked to advocate key messages through raising the profile of Link and its members, and creating opportunities for them, by attending external meetings and workshops with Ministers, Government officials, funders and other key stakeholders. Engagement with Government and its agencies included: quarterly meetings with Defra's Director of the Natural Environment; meetings with the Chair of the Board at the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC); and Natural England's chief executive, Chair of the Board and Director of Strategy and Innovation.

Another key element of Link's Director's work was to liaise with chief executives and policy directors of Link member organisations. Numerous such meetings were held throughout the year, providing an opportunity to share information and discuss Link's new strategy.

Link's Director continues to contribute to and benefit from a productive relationship with the three Directors of our sister Links in the devolved countries. Collectively all four Links are now known as 'Environment Links UK'. Directors hold quarterly phone meetings, in addition to a more or less weekly exchange of emails. The Directors regularly share both strategic and operational information and are exploring ways in which they can work even more proactively to effect positive change across the UK.

Structure, Governance and Management

Leadership

In 2015 Link saw the appointment of Hazel Norman (Chief Executive at the British Ecological Society) as Link's Chair, Paul Miner (Planning Campaign Manager at the Campaign to Protect Rural England) as Link's Deputy Chair, and Chris Butler Stroud (Chief Executive at Whale and Dolphin Conservation), Marcus Gilleard (Senior External Affairs Advisor at the National Trust) and Stephen Trotter (Director of England, the Wildlife Trusts) as Ordinary Trustees.

Link's Board of Trustees, and its Finance and Resources Sub Committee, each held four meetings during 2015, including its annual away day meeting in July.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 7 December 1999 and registered as a charity on 5 January 2005. Members of the Management Committee, who are Directors for the purpose of Company Law and Trustees for the purpose of Charity Law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report, are set out on Page 3.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In 2007 the Memorandum and Articles of Association were reviewed, both to ensure compliance with the Companies Act (2006) and Charities Act (2006), and following a number of years using the previous Memorandum and Articles of Association which had raised the need for further clarification. Under those Articles, the members of the Board of Trustees are elected by a postal vote in advance or by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees must retire at the third Annual General Meeting after that at which he or she was first elected, and are eligible for re-election for a further term ending on the sixth Annual General Meeting after their first election. The Treasurer must retire at the Annual General Meeting every three years but may stand for re-election with no maximum term of office.

Risk Management

Wildlife and Countryside Link views the management of risk as an integral element of our governance processes. The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by Link's Director and Trustees, are reviewed annually with systems established to mitigate those risks. It is recognised that any control system can only provide reasonable but not absolute assurance that major risks have been adequately managed.

The two main risks and uncertainties that face the charity, as identified in the Risk Register, include risks to financial income and reputation. Link aims to mitigate these risks by scrutinising the finances through the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, diversifying our funding sources, horizon scanning with members, non-members and stakeholders, and regularly communicating with CEOs of member organisations keeping them updated and engaged in Link issues.

All staff also ensure that protocols and procedures are adhered to, and the finances are closely monitored to ensure expenditure is appropriate and within reasonable limits, and adequate resources are in place. Link's Communications Manager also has experience in crisis management, and works with our Director and Trustees to reduce potential risks to Link's reputation.

Pay Policy for senior staff

The Trustees consider that the Board of Trustees and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day to day basis. All trustees give of their time freely and no trustee received remuneration in the year. Details of trustees' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in Note 6 to the accounts.

The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charity, the directors benchmark against pay levels in other charities of a similar size. The remuneration bench-mark is the mid-point of the range paid for similar roles adjusted for a weighting of up to 30% for any additional responsibilities. If recruitment has proven difficult in the recent past, a market addition is also paid, with the pay maximum no greater than the highest benchmarked salary for a comparable role.

Volunteers

Link continues to offer volunteering opportunities to people with a keen interest in Link issues. In 2015, we benefitted from the help of Lorena Villa and Jaqueline Tokalou.

Volunteers were given the chance to contribute to Link's monthly e-bulletins and to help with various Link campaigns and advocacy activities including the parliamentary launch of Water Matters and Farming Fit for the Future. In addition, volunteers were provided the opportunity to become involved in the activities of Link's working groups by supporting meetings, gathering information and undertaking specific research projects.

Independent Examiner

A resolution to confirm the appointment of John Speed from JS2 as independent examiner to the organisation was passed at the Annual General Meeting in December 2015 and will again be proposed at the next Annual General Meeting.

Exemptions from Disclosure

There are no exemptions required.

Funds held as custodian Trustee on behalf of others

Link does not have a custodian Trustee.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those individuals and organisations that made 2015 a great year for Link, including our members, partners, funders and colleagues. With your generous support, we will continue to work hard in 2016 and beyond to conserve and protect wildlife and the countryside.

Financial Review

Here we summarise financial information to give an overview of the charity’s financial performance during 2015, by using selected information from the full annual accounts. The full accounts can be seen at page 13.

A Message from Link’s Treasurer

Link’s accounts for 2015 illustrate how Link worked to increase its financial resilience and independence. Key to this was securing significant grants in addition to retaining the support of members through their subscriptions and donations.

Link’s total income in 2015 (see fig.1) was £292,832, of which £147,486 came from grants (discussed further on page 11 of this report). This form of income is expected to grow as we continue to implement the five-year strategy and achieve our four key objectives, as outlined on page 4.

The addition of two new member organisations in 2015 raised our income from subscriptions by 6% to £133,501, growing our strength as the voice of the environment sector.

Our total expenditure (see fig.2) amounted to £248,715 in the year, producing a surplus of £44,117 for 2015.

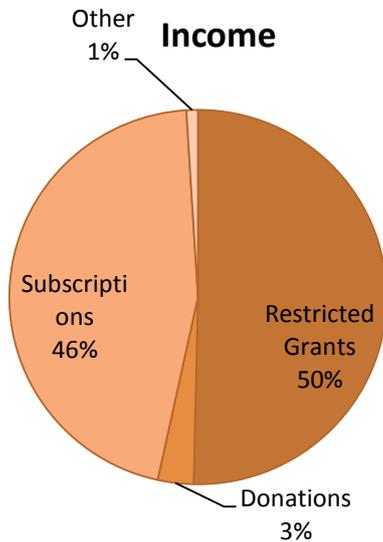


Figure 1: Summary of Link's income for 2015.

Expenditure relating to unrestricted funds accounted for 68% of total expenditure, with the remaining 32% of expenditure relating to restricted funds. The work of Link’s groups to enhance and strengthen environmental policy through specific projects totalled 15% of expenditure. Employee costs are detailed in Note 5. However, this does not take account of the tremendous contribution made to Link’s collaborative work by staff within our member organisations, who help us achieve so much.

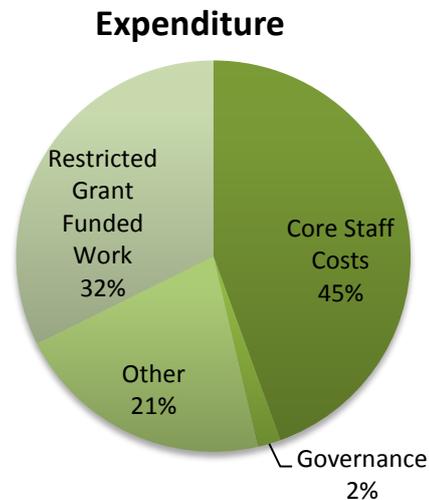


Figure 2: Summary of Link's expenditure in 2015.

Link’s reserves policy is to maintain free reserves at an operating level of six months to ensure our continued service and allow time to secure funding should Link encounter financial difficulty. Across the charity sector, reserves are often set lower than those set by Link, with one third of charities with an annual income of less than £1 million having no reserves at all¹. One of our main priorities for 2016 is to ensure we maintain our reserves at six months, through increased core funding in line with implementing our strategy.

2015 has been a strong year for Link and with the support from our members and supporters we are building a strong foundation to ensure our financial resilience.

David Lind, Treasurer

¹ <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac16/assets-and-reserves/>

Reserves

Wildlife and Countryside Link maintains reserves equivalent to six months' operating costs. These funds are unrestricted and therefore available to fund all aspects of Link's operations in the event that they should be required. These reserves allow Link to plan against future uncertainties.

The target level for reserves is set at that required for six months' operation of the organisation so that, should Link encounter financial difficulty, it may continue to provide its members with services at the same level for six months, thus giving members ample warning should the financial situation deteriorate further. It is felt that this is an appropriate amount of time for a small organisation such as Link, as it is likely that any additional or emergency funding would take some months to secure. The reserve funds would help to meet working capital requirements to cover Link's normal cash-flow operations throughout the year, and is reviewed on a regular basis.

At 31 December 2015, our free reserves stood at £77,416 (2014: £115,200), equivalent to five and a half months of current unrestricted expenditure. Throughout 2015 Link was successful in achieving grants for restricted purposes, safeguarding core funds. In 2016, we will be looking to secure funding to cover core costs, maximising our financial resilience and independence, allowing our reserve figure to be in line with our policy.

Grants

A key element of the Director's work in 2015 was developing and maintaining productive relationships with current and potential funders. In 2015, Link benefitted from grants from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation, the John Ellerman Foundation, and Link member WWF-UK. Link also received donations from a number of member organisations, including one from the RSPB to support our work on the Habitats and Birds Directives.

In line with the new strategy, and on securing a grant from the Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation, Link created a new post of Communications Manager. Sarah Bernard joined Link in April 2015 and has worked with the Link team, and with members, to add value to their work. This has included improved media coverage for members and our joint sector voice, enhanced stakeholder engagement and, in December 2015, the launch of Link's new [web site](#).

In October 2015, following success in securing a major grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Link team was restructured and a number of new roles created with the purpose of creating a strong, highly effective team with a broad range of skills and experience. The new Link team now comprises six highly capable individuals, led by Link's Director, Dr Elaine King. The new role of Head of Policy and Campaigns provides strategic support to the Director, while managing and guiding Link's policy and campaigns work, in large part through working closely with Link's Policy and Campaigns Managers and our member organisations.

WWF-UK supports Wildlife and Countryside Link, as well as the four Links of Environment Links UK (Wildlife and Countryside Link, Wales Environment Link, Scottish Environment LINK and Northern Ireland Environment Link) with a grant to support the Links' collaborative work across the UK.

WWF-UK also supports Wildlife and Countryside Link in continuing our core operations and projects that support WWF's objectives. This involves a variety of Link's work areas, such as illegal wildlife trade, the freshwater environment and our marine and whales groups, all of which WWF involve WWF-UK staff.

Since January 2014, Link has benefited through a grant from the John Ellerman Foundation, supporting Link's marine work through enabling employment of the Marine Policy and Campaigns Manager. This grant has facilitated the effective working of Link's Marine Group and Whales Group.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies exception of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006. It was approved, and authorised for issue, by the Trustees on 18 May 2016 and signed on its behalf by:

Dr Hazel Norman, Chair

Independent Examiners Report to the Members of Wildlife and Countryside Link

I report on the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2015 set out on the following pages.

This report is made solely to the Trustees, as a body, in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of the Charities Act 2011. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the Trustees matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Trustees for my independent examination work, for this report, or for the statement I have given below.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and independent examiner

The Trustees, who are the directors of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the purposes of company law, and the trustees for the purposes of charity law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements. The Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed. The Charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Having satisfied myself that the Charity is not subject to an audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commissioners under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity, and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charitieshave not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

JOHN SPEED FCA

JS2 Limited
One Crown Square
Woking,
Surrey
GU21 6HR

Date:

Statement of Financial Activities**For the year ended 31 December 2015****(Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)**

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2015 £	Restricted Funds 2015 £	Total Funds 2015 £	Total Funds 2014 £
INCOME					
Donations and legacies	2	8,973	-	8,973	62,814
Income from Charitable activities:					
Grants for project work	10	-	147,486	147,486	110,454
Subscriptions		133,501	-	133,501	125,649
Rent and service charges receivable		1,141	-	1,141	-
Other trading activities:					
Income from investments		1,731	-	1,731	-
TOTAL INCOME		145,346	147,486	292,832	298,917
EXPENDITURE					
Expenditure on Charitable activities	3	168,130	80,585	248,715	279,664
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		168,130	80,585	248,715	279,664
Net income/(expenditure)		(22,784)	66,901	44,117	19,253
Transfers between funds	10	(15,000)	15,000	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		(37,784)	81,901	44,117	19,253
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD		115,200	49,152	164,352	145,099
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		£ 77,416	£ 131,053	£ 208,469	£ 164,352

Registered Company number 03889519

Balance Sheet

As at 31 December 2015

	Notes	£	2015 £	£	2014 £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	7		694		2,287
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	8	7,773		7,501	
Cash at bank and in hand		206,176		161,933	
		<u>213,949</u>		<u>169,434</u>	
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	9	(6,174)		(7,369)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			207,775		162,065
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			<u>208,469</u>		<u>164,352</u>
NET ASSETS			<u>£ 208,469</u>		<u>£ 164,352</u>
FUNDS					
Restricted funds			131,053		49,152
General fund (unrestricted)			77,416		115,200
			<u>£ 208,469</u>		<u>£ 164,352</u>

For the year ended 31 December 2015 the Company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Directors' responsibilities:

- (i) The members have not required the Company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476;
- (ii) The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime. They were approved, and authorised for issue, by the directors on 18 May 2016 and signed on their behalf by:-

_____ Dr Hazel Norman, Chair

_____ David Lind, Treasurer

Statement of Cash Flows**For the year ended 31 December 2015**

	Notes	£	2015 £	£	2014 £
CASH FLOWS FROM					
OPERATING ACTIVITIES:					
Net income/(expenditure) for the year		44,117		19,253	
Adjustments for:					
Depreciation charges	7	1,593		2,020	
Interest		(1,731)		(220)	
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	8	(272)		5,307	
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	9	(1,195)		133	
NET CASH PROVIDED BY (USED IN)					
OPERATING ACTIVITIES:			42,512		26,492
CASH FLOWS FROM					
INVESTING ACTIVITIES:					
Interest		1,731		220	
NET CASH PROVIDED BY (USED IN)			1,731		220
INVESTING ACTIVITIES:					
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year			44,243		26,712
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			161,933		135,221
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			<u>£ 206,176</u>		<u>£ 161,933</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 December 2015

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparation of financial statements

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). The Charity is a public benefit entity for the purposes of FRS 102 and therefore has also prepared the financial statements in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (The FRS 102 Charities SORP) and the Charities Act 2011.

FRS 102 has been adopted for the first time when preparing these financial statements. The transition date to FRS 102 was 1 January 2014 and the last financial statements prepared under the previous financial reporting framework were prepared for the year ended 31 December 2014. In preparing the accounts, the trustees have considered whether in applying the accounting policies required by FRS 102 and the Charities SORP FRS 102 a restatement of comparative items was needed. No restatements were required.

The trustees have assessed whether the use of the going concern basis is appropriate and have considered possible events or conditions that might cast significant doubt on the ability of the Charity to continue as a going concern. The trustees have made this assessment for a period of at least one year from the date of approval of the financial statements. In particular, the trustees have considered the Charity's forecasts and projections. After making enquiries the trustees have concluded that there is a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The Charity therefore continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing its financial statements.

Company status

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of financial activities when the Charity has entitlement to the funds, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Subscription income from full and associate member organisations is invoiced on a calendar year basis and is recognised accordingly.

Grants are recognised as income in the Statement of financial activities in accordance with the terms attached by the grantor.

Income from recharged costs is accrued when the associated costs are incurred. Other donations and sundry income are recognised in the Statement of financial activities when received.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

Resources expended

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular activities they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of the resources.

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Fixtures and fittings - 4 years

Office equipment - 4 years

Operating leases

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the Statement of financial activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

2. VOLUNTARY INCOME

	Unrestricted Funds 2015 £	Restricted Funds 2015 £	Total Funds 2015 £	Total Funds 2014 £
Donations	8,973	-	8,973	5,314
Grants for core funding	-	-	-	57,500
	<u>£ 8,973</u>	<u>£ Nil</u>	<u>£ 8,973</u>	<u>£ 62,814</u>

Voluntary income in 2014 consisted entirely of unrestricted income.

3. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES: FACILITATION, COORDINATION & INFORMATION PROVISION

	Unrestricted Funds 2015 £	Restricted Funds 2015 £	Total Funds 2015 £	Total Funds 2014 £
Staff costs	110,595	62,164	172,759	155,553
Support costs (see Note 4)	4,737	-	4,737	3,540
Other costs	52,798	18,421	71,219	120,571
	<u>£ 168,130</u>	<u>£ 80,585</u>	<u>£ 248,715</u>	<u>£ 279,664</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)**4. SUPPORT COSTS**

	Unrestricted Funds 2015 £	Restricted Funds 2015 £	Total Funds 2015 £	<i>Total Funds 2014 £</i>
GOVERNANCE:				
Independent examination	2,280	-	2,280	3,520
Legal and professional fees	2,437	-	2,437	-
Other expenses	20	-	20	20
	<u>£ 4,737</u>	<u>£ Nil</u>	<u>£ 4,737</u>	<u>£ 3,540</u>

5. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS

	2015 £	<i>2014 £</i>
Wages and salaries	151,478	137,958
Social security costs	14,146	10,774
Pension costs	7,135	6,821
	<u>£ 172,759</u>	<u>£ 155,553</u>
	Number	<i>Number</i>
The average headcount during the year was as follows:	<u>6.3</u>	<u>5.3</u>

No employee received remuneration of more than £60,000 in the year or the previous year.

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise all staff members. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the Charity were as disclosed above.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBERS

During the year, no trustee received any remuneration. 1 trustee received reimbursement of expenses amounting to £300 (2014: Nil).

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Fixture and fittings £	Office equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At start of year	3,017	19,398	22,415
At 31 December 2015	<u>3,017</u>	<u>19,398</u>	<u>22,415</u>
Depreciation			
At start of year	3,016	17,112	20,128
Charge for the year	-	1,593	1,593
At 31 December 2015	<u>3,016</u>	<u>18,705</u>	<u>21,721</u>
Net book value			
At 31 December 2014	£ 1	£ 2,286	£ 2,287
At 31 December 2015	<u>£ 1</u>	<u>£ 693</u>	<u>£ 694</u>

8. DEBTORS

	2015 £	2014 £
Prepayments	7,773	7,310
Accrued income	-	191
	<u>£ 7,773</u>	<u>£ 7,501</u>

9. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2015 £	2014 £
Accruals	6,174	7,100
Other creditors	-	269
	<u>£ 6,174</u>	<u>£ 7,369</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

10. STATEMENT OF FUNDS

	Brought Forward 1 January 2015 £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward 31 December 2015 £
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
1. Joint Links	665	-	(271)	-	394
2. Common Agricultural Policy	1,293	4,300	(4,706)	-	887
3. Marine Projects					
i) Phase II	2,506	-	-	-	2,506
ii) Phase III	42,880	-	(25,899)	-	16,981
iii) Marine Charter	(566)	975	(409)	-	-
4. Blueprint for Water	738	10,000	(4,727)	-	6,011
5. Planning Coalition	289	-	-	-	289
6. Nature Check	750	-	(17)	-	733
7. ECN	-	2,211	(2,194)	-	17
8. Strategic review	597	-	-	-	597
9. The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	115,000	(26,550)	-	88,450
10. The Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation	-	15,000	(15,812)	15,000	14,188
	49,152	147,486	(80,585)	15,000	131,053
GENERAL FUND	115,200	145,346	(168,130)	(15,000)	77,416
TOTAL FUNDS	£ 164,352	£ 292,832	£ (248,715)	£ Nil	£ 208,469

SUMMARY OF FUNDS IN THE PRIOR YEAR

	Brought forward 1 January 2014 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers and gains £	Carried forward 31 December 2014 £
General fund	90,825	188,463	(165,664)	1,576	115,200
Restricted funds	54,274	110,454	(114,000)	(1,576)	49,152
	£ 145,099	£ 298,917	£ (279,664)	£ Nil	£ 164,352

Purposes of restricted funds:

1. Joint Links
The WWF-UK Joint Links project grant supports the four Link organisations in the UK (Wildlife and Countryside Link, Wales Environment Link, Scottish Environment LINK and Northern Ireland Environment Link) in updating each other and collaborating on work programmes, key priorities, and operational matters, through meetings, email communications and conference calls. In 2015, £665 was carried over from 2014. These funds were distributed equally amongst the Joint Links for use in individual Joint Link's core work including travel and subsistence and meeting room hire for a conference in Birmingham. A surplus of £394 is carried over into 2016.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

2. Common Agricultural Policy

This project was set up in 2008 to fund the publication and launch of the Agriculture Working Group's policy perspective on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy. £1293 was carried over into 2015. The Group published a report, Farming Fit for the Future, in September 2015 and launched this at a parliamentary event. In order to undertake this, project donations were received from members to the amount of £4,300. £4,706 was spent throughout 2015 and therefore £887 is carried forward into 2016.

3. Marine Projects

i) MPCC Phase II

This relates to funding provided by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation towards the costs of a full time Marine and Policy Campaigns Coordinator. The project ended on 31 January 2014 and was immediately succeeded by the MPCC Phase III. There is £2,506 left in this fund.

ii) MPCC Phase III

This relates to funding from the John Ellerman Foundation towards the costs of a full time Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator at Wildlife and Countryside Link. Due to changes within Link's staff team, the project, originally running from January 2014 – January 2017, will now run from January 2014 to February 2017. From November 2015 the post was changed to Marine Policy and Campaigns Manager (MPCM). This project fund provides for the salary and some associated expenses of the post.

iii) Marine Charter

This relates to funding from The Wildlife Trusts, on behalf of the MPA Fighting Fund, towards the cost of the Marine Charter campaign which was active from February 2014. During 2015, funds were spent on all expenses related to the set up and running of the campaign including media graphic costs, mail outs and conference call expenditure. The deficit of £566 was carried over into 2015, as well as £409 of additional expenditure for the year which was recovered from the Wildlife Trusts. This fund has now been brought to £0.

4. Blueprint for Water

The Blueprint for Water project was set up in 2009 to fund the publication and distribution of the Blueprint coalition's third report. £738 was carried forward into 2015 from 2014. Link member charities contributed £10,000 to the Blueprint project over the course of 2015. £4,727 of the fund was spent on producing a document for publication (Water Matters) and launching this in Parliament, as well as maintaining a website created in 2014, and funding travel and subsistence. £6,011 has been carried forward into 2016.

5. Planning Coalition

The Planning Coalition fund was set up in 2010 to cover costs associated with the publication and distribution of the new Greenest Planning Ever Coalition's 'Vision for the Future of Planning' report. £289 was carried over into 2015. No funds have been spent since 2014 and £289 has been carried forward into 2016.

6. Nature Check

The Nature Check fund was set up in 2011 to cover the costs associated with assessment, reporting and launch of project findings on the Coalition Government's performance on the natural environment, as part of its commitment to be the "greenest Government ever". £750 was carried over from 2014 into 2015. £17 was spent in 2015 on renewing the Nature Check website address. £733 has been carried over to 2016.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

7. **Ecologically Coherent Network**
This fund relates to funding from WWF-UK for Link's Ecologically Coherent Network (MPA Fighting Fund) project. The project was set up in March 2014 and covers conference calls and consultancy work relating to the project. In 2015 a total of £2,194 was spent, primarily for the production of an infographic relating to the project as well as conference call expenditure. £17 will be carried forward into 2016.
8. **Strategic Review**
The Strategic Review fund was set up in 2014 to fund the development of a new five year strategy for Wildlife and Countryside Link. Link funded the project with grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Catalyst grants scheme and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. No funds have been spent since 2014 and £597 has been carried over to 2016.
9. **The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation**
In 2015, Link received a proportion of a two-year grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, secured to support implementation of Link's five-year strategy. The grant funds the roles of the Director and the Head of Policy and Campaigns. £26,550 of this was expended in 2015, allowing £88,450 to be carried forward.
10. **Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation**
The Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation funds the role of Link's Communications Manager. This grant began in April 2015 and £14,188 has been carried forward into 2016, following the 2015 expenditure of £15,812. A transfer has been made into the fund of £15,000 from general funds representing the ringfencing of the 2014 grant.

11. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
Tangible fixed assets	694	-	694
Net current assets	<u>76,722</u>	<u>131,053</u>	<u>207,775</u>
	<u>£ 77,416</u>	<u>£ 131,053</u>	<u>£ 208,469</u>

12. OPERATING LEASE COMMITMENTS

At the year end the Charity had total commitments under the non-cancellable operating lease on its premises repayable as follows:

	2015 £	2014 £
Operating leases which expire:		
within one year	25,193	5,371
within two to five years	18,895	-
	<u>£ 44,088</u>	<u>£ 5,371</u>