

E-bulletin August 2014

Welcome to Link's August 2014 e-bulletin. See below for this month's top stories and updates from each of our working groups. If you would like to subscribe to our e-bulletin or submit news items, please contact [Morwenna](#).



Minister site visit

On 12 August Link's Marine Group arranged a Marine Conservation Zone site visit for the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for farming, food and marine environment, George Eustice MP, to the Isles of Scilly. As part of the visit, Link hosted a tour for the Minister and his officials on a glass-bottomed boat, which provided an opportunity for him to view marine wildlife both above and below the water such as seals, seabirds and seagrass beds. Link also briefed the Minister on a range of marine conservation issues.

Marine meeting with No. 10

On 20 August Link attended a meeting at No 10 Downing Street with Tara Singh, special advisor to the Prime Minister, to discuss the marine environment. Link briefed Tara on Marine Conservation Zones, sites for mobile species, ecological coherence and Link's [Marine Charter](#) campaign.

Blueprint meeting with the Environment Agency

The Blueprint for Water met with National Flood and Coastal Risk Managers, Rachael Hill and Adrian Rushworth, from the Environment Agency on 14 August. They echoed Minister's Dan Rogerson view that dredging is not the only solution to flooding but one of the options. However, the Agency has compiled a list of 1,300 sites where dredging may be cost-beneficial. They also reported that the Water Framework Directive has been a challenging process but felt they are making progress and making improvements at applying catchment based approaches. The Agency agreed to continue its engagement with NGOs.

Response to cross compliance consultation

Link will be responding to Defra's request for views on the proposed cross compliance rules under the new CAP programme that will apply from January 2015 and associated guidance. The deadline for comments is Friday 5 Sept. The new Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAECs) are:

- GAEC 4 – minimum soil cover
- GAEC 5 – minimum land management reflecting site specific conditions to limit erosion
- GAEC 6 – maintenance of soil organic matter including a ban on arable stubble burning

Link wants to ensure that the new GAECs are enforceable and provide a strong level of environmental protection.



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Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

Link will be attending the Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG) meeting due to be held on Wednesday 10 September. Items on the agenda include delivery & reporting to Biodiversity Programme Board, Woodland conservation and Defra's 'Deep dive' feedback.

Biodiversity Indicators

Link is liaising with Defra regarding its plans to update and develop the UK and England Biodiversity Indicators that it publishes each year. In particular, Defra is working on developing a methodology to reach an estimate of public sector expenditure on biodiversity using a set of specific indicators. Link and Defra will be holding a meeting on this issue over the next few weeks. For further information contact [Kirsten Loveday](#).



The Link INNS Task and Finish Group came to a close at the end of June. The INNS work will continue but primarily outside Link. For more information about current INNS work please contact Kay Haw at the Woodland Trust: KayHaw@woodlandtrust.org.uk



Land Use and Planning Working Group meeting

The group met on 9 July to discuss current issues such as the Infrastructure Bill, fracking and biodiversity offsetting.



Criminal Justice and Courts Bill

The relevant clauses of Part 4 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill (Judicial Review) were debated in Committee in the Lords on 30th July. Link's amendment was tabled by Lord Beecham and Lord Kennedy (and supported by others, including Lord Marks of Henley on Thames) but resisted by Lord Faulks QC (Minister of State (Ministry of Justice)). The amendment was consequently withdrawn but the Government agreed to reflect on the points during the Recess and report back. Report stage in the House of Lords is scheduled for 20th October 2014.

Infrastructure Bill

Clause 16 of the Infrastructure Bill has caused some concern amongst Link members because, as drafted, it could result in species control agreements, and orders to combat invasive non-native species, being applied to species that are extinct in the UK, because they are not currently resident. Furthermore, any native species becoming extinct in the future and species that may naturally colonise our shores under a changing climate would also be classified as non-native. The Bill also defines as non-native certain native species included in Schedule 9 of the 1981.

Following publication of a briefing involving a number of Link members, Baroness Parminter tabled amendments at Committee stage. These were withdrawn after the Minister advised that a consultation would be conducted on a Code of Practice governing how Clause 16 is to be applied. Link members and others are seeking a meeting with the Minister before Report Stage to discuss appropriate amendments to address their concerns. The Infrastructure Bill is yet to pass through the House of Commons so further opportunities will exist to address this issue.

For further information, contact [Sheila Wren](#) and [Richard Benwell](#).



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Offshore Wind Coping Strategy Response

At the end of August, Link responded to a draft project proposal from the Crown Estate regarding the creation of an Offshore Wind Coping Strategy cumulative impact database. In the response, Link expressed support for the database, recognising that ornithological impacts are currently high priority and present high consenting risk. However, Link also expressed concern that cumulative effects on marine mammals are not being given the same consideration.



The 25 Year Plan

In March 2014 the Natural Capital Committee proposed the idea of a long term plan (25 years) for maintaining and improving our natural capital. Link has organised a meeting for 16 September with Nick Barter, Head of the Natural Capital Committee Secretariat at Defra, to discuss the 25 Year Plan and members' contribution in order to put together a framework for protecting and improving natural capital.



Meeting with the Environment Agency

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Letter to the Minister

On 22 August Link submitted a letter to the Minister George Eustice MP outlining the group's position on a range of proposals under consideration at the upcoming 65th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) that will convene between the 15 and 18 of September in Portoroz, Slovenia.



Letter to the new head of the NWCU

Following the announcement on 8 August that Chief Inspector Martin Sims has been appointed as the new Head of the Unit, the group will be writing to him to congratulate him on his new role and introducing ourselves and the work we have done over the last several years.

New Vice-Chair

The whole group extends their thanks to Mark Jones for his fantastic work as Vice-Chair of the working group and wish him well in his new role outside of the Link membership. We welcome Tania McCrea-Steele, International Fund for Animal Welfare, as the new Acting Vice-Chair of the group.

