

E-bulletin June 2015

Welcome to Link's June 2015 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 [Maria](#).



Letter to George Eustice MP

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Letter to Secretary of State on Conservation Covenants

On 18 June, Link's Legal Strategy Group wrote to Elizabeth Truss MP, Secretary for State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs at Defra, seeking information on the status of Conservation Covenants. In June 2014 the Law Commission published a report on Conservation Covenants which included a draft Bill. A Government response to the report and an indication of Defra's intention with regard to the proposed legislative changes is still awaited. Link's submission to the previous Law Commission Wildlife Law consultation can be found [here](#).

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On 18 June, Link's Whales Group wrote to George Eustice, Minister of State for Farming, Food and the Marine Environment, Defra. The letter recognised the continued excellent engagement of the UK Defra team on the whaling issue; and confirmed its commitment to working with Defra on matters relating to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) including: addressing whaling by Iceland, Japan and Norway; strengthening the work of the IWC on other threats to cetaceans; and integrating animal welfare further into its work.

Joint Link Statement on Access to Justice

On 15-17 June, the Joint Links [Statement on Access to Justice](#) was presented in person by Carol Day, on behalf of the Joint Links, to the 8th meeting of the Task Force for Access to Justice under the Aarhus Convention. The statement identifies inconsistencies between the devolved administrations of the UK and outlines concerns regarding issues of cost, time limits and the scope of Judicial Review which undermine the UK's ability to comply with the Aarhus Convention. The statement urges the UK Government and devolved administrations to effect sufficient changes to bring the UK into compliance.

The meeting was well-attended by contracting Parties to the Convention, academics, NGOs and members of the Senior Judiciary. Studies concerning various aspects of Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention were discussed, including a German comparative law study on standing (Article 9(3)) and the scope of judicial procedures (Article 9(2)), which will cover the UK. A meeting was held with the UK delegation after the Task Force meeting to discuss Link's concerns and the Joint Links sent a follow-up letter to all members of the UK delegation. The Joint Link statement received significant media coverage and was the subject of an ENDS Report article and was addressed by [Mark Avery in his blog](#).

Guidance on Brownfield Land of High Environmental Value

On 2 June, Link's Land Use Planning Group published its '[Guidance on Brownfield Land of High Environmental Value](#)' and a [press release](#).

Following the Government's recent proposal to introduce a statutory register for brownfield land, the Link document calls on the Government to honour its original commitment to 'protect previously developed or brownfield land that is of high environmental value for wildlife'. The guidance determines what is meant by 'high environmental value' and provides a definition which will make it easier for local authorities and developers to appropriately prioritise brownfield sites for development while honouring the Government's commitment to protect wildlife.

The Guidance received significant media coverage including articles published in The ENDS Report and Planning Resource.



Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee

On 25 June, Link attended the Programme Monitoring Committee for the new Rural Development Programme for England. The Committee discussed the selection criteria for countryside stewardship, the Programme Manager's recent report and the information and publicity strategy for the new Rural Development Programme.



Group meeting

The Animal Welfare Strategy Group (AWSG) convened on 18 July. The group discussed its engagement with other groups including the Agriculture, Invasive Non-Native Species, Legal Strategy, Water, Whales and Wildlife Trade groups. The group also developed plans for a joint event with the Legal Strategy Group.

The group will meet again in August.

Meeting with Defra's Animal Welfare Team

On 22 June, the Chair and Vice Chair, Alyx Elliot and Claire Bass, of the AWSG, met with the Defra Animal Welfare Team. The Defra team updated Link on their welfare work since the general election, and the Link group shared information on its activities since May. The possibility of a Wild Animal Welfare Committee was also discussed.

The group will meet with Defra again in September.

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Biodiversity

Link seeks to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by working with Government to ensure Biodiversity 2020 is fully implemented. Specifically, we engage with Defra and Natural England on governance issues, communications and the Biodiversity 2020 delivery plan. Please contact [Elaine King](#) for more information.



Habitats and Birds

UK mission meeting

Throughout May and June, the European Commission held 'mission' meetings with 10 member states to discuss the member state's stakeholder evidence submissions. On 1 June, ten delegates from the Joint Links REFIT group attended the UK NGO mission meeting with the Commission and the consultants carrying out the REFIT review. NGOs at the meeting raised points on a wide range of policy areas including; marine; landscapes; health and wellbeing; the economy; and legal coherence.

REFIT Group meetings

The Joint Links REFIT group will be meeting on 30 June to discuss future advocacy and campaigns work.

The REFIT communications subgroup met in June to discuss the naturealert.eu online questionnaire which has now received over a quarter of a million responses from citizens across Europe. The consultation has received the largest number of responses to a European Commission consultation in history. This impressive response was noted during Green Week by European Commissioner Karmenu Vella in his speech.



Invasive Non-Native Species

Consultation to review Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)

Link's INNS group are taking part in [Joint Nature Conservation Committee led consultation](#) to add or remove non-native species from Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981). The consultation will inform the recommendations JNCC will make to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and to the Minister for the Environment in the Welsh Government for changes to the schedule. The consultation will close on Sunday 2 August 2015.

INNS Working Group Meeting

Link's Invasive Non Native Species Group (INNS) convened on 26 May. The group discussed its work plan for 2015-2016 and the how the group can engage with Link's Animal Welfare Strategy Group. The group also discussed the Infrastructure Bill review of schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the consultation due to be published this month. Other items discussed included: developing Link's official INNS principles; the EU Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Regulation; and the new International Maritime Organisation Polar Code.

The INNS Group will convene again on 23 July.



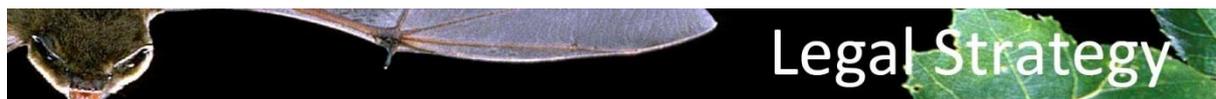
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The Group will meet again on 1 July.



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Group meeting

On 15 June, the Marine Working Group met to discuss its future activities in the context of a new Government. Items discussed included the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and Marine Protected Areas.

Meeting with Natural England

On 17 June, the Marine Group met with Natural England in Bristol where discussions included the designation, management and conservation of Marine Protected Areas.



Catchment-Based Approach Conference 2015

Link attended the Catchment-Based Approach (CaBA) Conference, which took place on 8 June in London. A large number of NGOs, water companies and local authorities gathered to hear about CaBA partnership achievements since its inception in 2013. The presentations showcased the benefits and impacts of working in partnership with various stakeholders in order to deliver improvements to our waters. Some interesting challenges were presented together with solutions for different urban locations.

Blueprint for Water Group meeting

The Blueprint for Water group met on 11 June to discuss its progress this year, with particular focus on policy recommendations for government. The Group also discussed development of its advocacy plans for the rest of the year including engagement activities with MPs during the summer. Alyx Elliott, Chair of the Animal Welfare Strategy Group (AWSG) also attended the meeting to discuss how the AWSG might support aspects of the Blueprint for Water Group's work where it relates to animal welfare and protection.



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Wildlife Trade meeting

The Group met on 15 June to discuss its post-election response including letters to recently formed governmental cabinets and Ministers. The Group's discussions focussed particularly on the COTES consultation, and CITES, along with the Group's priorities ahead of next year's Conference of the Parties 17 in South Africa.

Community Involvement Panel meeting

On 23 June members of the Wildlife Trade Working Group attended the Community Involvement Panel meeting. During the meeting, Guy Shorrock (RSPB) and Sarah Goddard (WWF) gave presentations on the fight against raptor crime and on sentencing guidelines.

