

E-bulletin November 2014

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



Link AGM and Annual Debate 2014

Link looks forward to welcoming members to the 2014 AGM and Annual Debate which will take place on the 10 December at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's London Wetland Centre. The debate will pose the question: 'critically endangered: how do we protect the spirit of the Habitats and Birds Directives?'

Link is very pleased to welcome Dr Micheal O'Briain, Deputy Head of the Nature Unit, DG Environment, European Commission. Dr O'Briain is leading the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) of EU Nature Legislation, including the Habitats and Birds Directives. In a presentation, followed by a Q&A session, Dr O'Briain will describe the REFIT process, outline the current timetable and discuss how Link members can engage with the Commission's fitness check consultation. Kate Jennings, chair of Link's Habitats and Birds Task and Finish Group, will also present an outline of members' current views on the Directives and the proposed REFIT process.

The debate will take place from 16:00 to 17:30 and will be followed by a drinks reception. Please email [Maria](#) for further information and to request a booking form.

Marine Charter Parliamentary Reception

Link hosted a reception at the House of Commons on 19 November to showcase the cross-party support for Link's Marine Charter campaign. The Charter calls for the swift designation of a representative and well-managed ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas in UK seas by 2016 and has been signed by over 150 MPs and Peers. The reception also included speeches, endorsing the Charter, from the Fisheries Minister George Eustice MP, Shadow Defra Minister Angela Smith MP and Lib Dem Defra spokesperson Roger Williams. A photobook, with images of UK marine wildlife and quotes from the 21 Link members supporting the Charter, can be downloaded [here](#).

REFIT of the Habitats and Birds Directives

Link's REFIT Task and Finish Group, set up to address the EU review of the Habitats and Birds Directives, met on the 11 November. The REFIT initiative focuses on reducing 'regulatory burden', so as to meet EU policy and regulatory goals at least cost. The inclusion of the Birds and Habitats Directives within this process is the latest manifestation of the ongoing threats to the Directives. Twenty Link members were represented at the meeting, which focussed on key updates including appointment by the EU of the consultants who are working on the REFIT. The group will be holding a further meeting on 18 December to discuss responding to the process and working as a coalition with our sister Links in the devolved countries.

For more information on the meeting and/or Link's work on this issue, please contact [Morwenna](#).

Blueprint meeting with the Environment Agency

Members of the Blueprint for Water (BP) group met with Toby Willison & Trevor Bishop from the Environment Agency (EA) to discuss the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction (RSA) programme as well as the Water Framework Directive (WFD). EA stated that the RSA plans will be completed by 2019. The Blueprint emphasised the importance of completing the RSA programme before the abstraction reform is implemented. The attendees at from the group agreed to have regular meetings between the BP and EA. A date will be set for the next meeting in May, to discuss progress on the above, as well as on the River Basin Management Plans.

Wildlife Trade Group Community Involvement Panel meeting

Link was well represented at the first Community Involvement Panel meeting hosted by Sue Hemming, Senior Wildlife Champion, Crown Prosecution Service. The group believes this will be a useful forum and looks forward to engaging with the CPS and specialist prosecutors at future panel meetings.



Working Group meeting

The group will be holding its first meeting of the New Year on Wednesday 21 January. This will be an opportunity for the group to reflect on its achievements and plan its future work.

Chair and Vice-Chair

I am pleased to inform you that Abi Bunker (RSPB) and Helen Perkins (TWT) were voted in at Link's AGM on Wednesday 10 December as Chair and Vice-Chair for the group in 2015. The group extends their thanks for all their hard work this year and for their commitment to support the group into next year.



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For more information on the meeting and/or Link's work on this issue, please contact [Morwenna](#).

Link's Annual Debate

This year's Annual Debate will focus on the REFIT of the Habitats and Birds Directives and will pose the question: 'critically endangered: how do we protect the spirit of the Habitats and Birds Directives?'

The debate will take place on the 10 December at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Barnes from 16:00-17:30. Link is delighted to welcome Dr Micheal O'Briain, Deputy Head of the Nature Unit, DG Environment, European Commission. Dr O'Briain will present on the issue and this will then be followed by a Q&A session during which members are invited to contribute.

If you would like to attend the annual debate, please contact [Maria](#) for more information and registration form.



Indicators meeting

Link met with Defra on 23 September to discuss the biodiversity indicator on UK NGO spend. This was a very positive meeting and Defra will be sending Link a draft of the report before its publication in December.

Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

Link was represented at the TBG meeting on 10 September. Items on the agenda included the reports on the outcomes for *Biodiversity 2020* and woodlands and Forestry Commission member contributions on biodiversity activity.

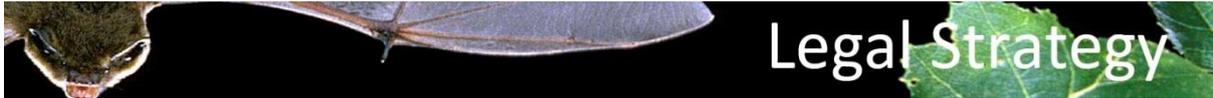


The Link INNS Task and Finish Group came to a close at the end of June. The INNS work will continue but primarily outside Link. For more information about current INNS work please contact Kay Haw at the Woodland Trust: KayHaw@woodlandtrust.org.uk



Land Use & Planning Working Group meeting

The team met to discuss 2015 plans and invited Frances Winder, chair of the Natural Values Task and Finish Group, to help us shape the strategy work for biodiversity offsetting. The current Infrastructure Bill was also discussed and the team exchanged thoughts and ideas of how we can contribute as Link in the future.



Criminal Justice and Courts Bill

The Lords amendments to the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill will go to a Commons vote on December 1st. The Government intends to vote the Lord's amendments down, however the Opposition is opposing. The notice of amendments given up to and including 27 November 2014 can be found [here](#).

In advance of the debate, the Legal Strategy Group sent an amended briefing to the Shadow Justice Team requesting continuing support for Lord Beecham's amendments (briefing available from [Maria](#)) and emailed friendly backbenchers. Thanks must go to the RSPB's Parliamentary Team for providing much-needed support during the Lords stage of the Bill. The Legal Strategy Group intends to draft compromise amendments if the Bill goes to Ping-Pong.

Legal Strategy Group Meeting

Link's Legal Strategy Group met on 11 November to discuss a range of legal matters. Under discussion included the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill, Aarhus Convention and Judicial Review, the Nature and Wellbeing Act, Conservation Covenants, the Infrastructure Bill and the Smarter Environmental Regulations Review.

The group also discussed the workplan for 2015. In particular how the Legal Strategy Group could contribute to other Link working groups with regards to legal matters in order to help them pursue their own work. If members would like to discuss the possibility of utilising the Legal Strategy group's expertise for their own working group, please contact [Maria](#).



Marine Charter Parliamentary Reception

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Marine Working Group meeting

Link's Marine Working Group met on 4 November to discuss a range of marine issues such as the designation and management of Marine protected Areas, Ecological Coherence and marine planning. The group also discussed the workplan for next year.

Meeting with JNCC

Link met with Marcus Yeo, Chief Executive of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), on 25 November to discuss a range of issues including MPAs for mobile species, offshore wind and noise issues and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Joint Links Marine Strategy Framework Directive meeting

Link hosted a Joint Links meeting in London on 5 November to discuss how best to respond to the upcoming Marine Strategy Framework Directive programmes of measures consultation which is due to be launched in the new year.

Points System for Fishing Vessel Masters

Link responded to the Defra consultation on the introduction of a Points System for Fishing Vessel Masters, calling for appropriate and credible deterrents.



The 25 Year Plan

Link members met with Nick Barter, Head of the Natural Capital Committee Secretariat, on 16 December to discuss members' contributions to the Natural Capital Committee's long term plan (25 years) for maintaining and improving our natural capital. Julian Harlow (Economic Advisor) and Georgina Mace (Professor at University College London) also attended the meeting, representing Defra. Their main interest was to receive well-developed restoration projects and case studies to enable them to improve their portfolio and add further value to their research.



Blueprint for Water Working Group meeting

The Blueprint for Water WG met on the 4th of November to discuss the campaign and website launch amongst other topics. The [Save our Waters](#) (SoW) campaign has received so far more than 250 responses to the short questionnaire. The initial analyses of the responses seem to indicate that people believe that almost 60% of our waters are unhealthy due to litter, industrial and agricultural pollution. This preliminary survey also gave the group an indication of how people value our waters for recreation and assessed their awareness about the importance of water for wildlife and people. The team discussed 2015 plans and a Steering Group is currently being set up to produce a concise and timely advocacy plan around the Blueprint for Water work, with special focus on the [Save our Waters](#) campaign.

Blueprint meeting with the Environment Agency

Members of the Blueprint for Water group met with Toby Willison & Trevor Bishop from the Environment Agency (EA) to discuss the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction (RSA) programme as well as the Water Framework Directive (WFD). EA stated that the RSA plans will be completed by 2019. The Blueprint emphasised the importance of completing the RSA programme before the abstraction reform is implemented. The attendees from the group agreed to have regular meetings between the

BP & EA. A date will be set up for the next meeting in May to discuss progress on the above, as well as on the River Basin Management Plans.



Whales

Meeting with the IWC Commissioner

On 25 November Link met with Nigel Gooding, the UK Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC), to discuss developments and actions coming out of the IWC meeting in Slovenia in September.

Whales Working Group meeting

Link's Whales Working group met on 25 November to discuss a number of international cetacean issues such as Japan's new scientific whaling plan. The group also discussed the workplan for next year.



Wildlife Trade

Community Involvement Panel meeting

Link was well represented at the first Community Involvement Panel meeting hosted by Sue Hemming, Senior Wildlife Champion, Crown Prosecution Service. The group believes this will be a useful forum and looks forward to engaging with the CPS and specialist prosecutors at future panel meetings.

Letter to Lynne Featherstone

On 28 November, Link wrote a letter to the Rt Hon Lynne Featherstone MP, the new Minister of state for Crime Prevention. Link congratulated her on her new role highlighted the need for wildlife crime to be treated as serious and organised crime that is recorded and available on a public database. Link has asked to meet with the Minister to discuss these issues and the Home Offices role in the cross-departmental task force.

