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In the text Link documents
are in italics and underlined.

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



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Wildlife and
Countryside



Quarterly Report July - September 2002

Quote of the Quarter: “The group is greater than the sum of its parts.” - Martin Harper (Plantlife) on the performance of the Farming and Rural Development Group 2002

Letter from the Chair

The third quarter of the year has been busy as ever, with lots going on in most of Link's work areas. Many thanks for filling in questionnaires and putting in suggestions for next year. Overall the working groups and task forces have achieved high-level recognition with decision-makers and established a good level of trust between members.

In discussion with working group chairs and others, we are already planning improvements for next year and will be looking for your input soon.

A lot of hard work culminated in September in the Water Task Force's powerfully-argued joint submission to the Environment Agency on the consultation on the technical annexes of the Water Framework Directive – something which could affect the aquatic environment for many years to come. The Water Task Force also showed how joint working with Scottish Link pays off through sharing experience and expertise across the borders and work on the parallel SEPA consultation.

We welcome Annie Smith, our new Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator. Annie arrived just in time to help in the office refurbishment – the new layout has certainly improved the working environment. Do take the chance to visit Link's offices if you're in the area.

Jen Bolton will be surveying members' IT resources in the next quarter as we need to know what IT you currently have, and how you are looking to develop over the next 12 months. This will allow us to tailor what Link provides to meet your needs.

As 2002 comes to a close, we hope you will also be able to take a chance to relax and celebrate our successes together with us at the Link AGM and Christmas Party on 13th December.

Tony Burton

Working Groups

Farming and Rural Development

The last 3 months have been full of announcements and consultations. The site visit on July 18th to Thornham Hall in Suffolk with Geoff Radley and other members of the Conservation Management Division was very useful, though marred by a train problem which prevented several members of the group from getting to the site. The site visit was timely as it was an opportunity to show the Defra' officials the possible benefits of revised schemes.

The spending review announcements were favourable for Defra, though the further detail given by Defra in September on the allocation of the funds still left some questions unanswered. Ministerial responsibilities within the department were realigned.

Fischler's CAP Mid-Term review prompted discussions about the possible impacts of the reform in the different area of the UK. Link members responded individually to Defra's consultation, however this was greatly aided by the Link meeting with the Land Use Policy group and presentations by IEEP. The Joint Links conference call on Fischler's reform proposals also helped informed the Links in England, Scotland and Wales of the progress of consultations in the different countries.

The Agri-Environment Review Steering group has been active; Link members have co-ordinated input to DEFRA on the Agri Environment schemes, submitting comments on the Framework document and the BSS.

The Lord Whitty contact group meeting provided Link with a forum to raise matters at a ministerial level and to request more representation for Heritage issues. Link has requested to see the draft sustainable farming strategy paper so that we can have some input before this is formalised.

Activities

5/8, 24/9 - Meetings of the Farming and Rural Development group

External meetings

Site visit with Geoff Radley and his team

5/8 - Meeting of Link Farming group and the Land Use Policy group

31/7, 17/9 - DEFRA Agri Environment Schemes review meetings

Output

Comments on draft AES Framework document and BSS submitted

Activity Forecast

24/10 - Lord Whitty Sustainable Food and Farming Contact Group meeting

Nov - Publication of Sustainable Farming Strategy

Members to use friendly farmers to help with pre-pilot testing of BSS

Publication of Uplands BSS draft

Joint Links teleconference on Farming policy issues

Workplan for 2003

Wildlife and Trade (including Whaling)

COTES

The group submitted a response DEFRA's pre-consultation paper on COTES (the legal statutory instrument used to enforce the European Regulations on the control of trade in endangered species and CITES) following a meeting with DEFRA's Global Wildlife Division. We now await the opening of the public consultation.

CITES

The group's work has largely been dominated by CITES with CoP12 to be held in Santiago in November. Meacher was

swayed by the group's request that an NGO representative should be included on the UK delegation, and the group asked Arthur Lindley of the RSPCA to take on this role. He will be joined on the delegation by a member of the Sustainable Users Network.

Cuba's hawksbill turtle proposal has been dropped, and key issues remain Black Sea bottlenose dolphin, Elephants, Patagonian and Antarctic toothfish, Japanese whale proposals and the Cayman Islands' Green turtle farm registration. There are also concerns regarding proposals on listing criteria and the rights of observers.

A meeting with Bob Ford (DEFRA's Global Wildlife Division) at the end of the quarter to discuss the EU's draft decision on the CITES proposals revealed the key areas of disagreement between Link and DEFRA (and the EU) to be bottlenose dolphin, toothfish and the Cayman Turtle Farm. Lobbying on these and other issues will continue at a meeting with Elliott Morley (who hopes to attend part of the CoP as head of the UK delegation), Bob Ford and Martin Brasher in the near future.

External meetings

13/7 - Meeting between Link and DEFRA, FCO and CITES Scientific Authority, attended by Michael Meacher, on CITES

9/8 - Meeting between Link, CITES Scientific Authority, FCO and Cayman Turtle Farm representative, on the turtle farm

15/8 - Meeting between Link and DEFRA on COTES

6/9 - Meeting with Steve Lee Bapty on CMS

26/9 - Meeting between Link and Bob Ford (DEFRA GWD) - an update on the EU draft decision on CITES proposals

Activity Forecast

16/10 - Meeting between Link, DEFRA and FCO officials, CITES Scientific Authority and Elliott Morley

Working Groups and Task Forces

3 - 15/11- CITES CoP12,
Santiago, Chile

Whales

CoP7 of the Convention on Migratory Species delivered encouraging results, with Fin, Sei and Sperm whales being listed on Appendix I (this requires evidence that species are endangered, and calls for Range States to prohibit capture of individuals as well as the implementation of conservation measures). Antarctic Minke, Bryde's and Pygmy Right Whale were listed on Appendix II (which calls for international agreements for conservation management to return species to favourable status), and a resolution was adopted noting that the reason for their non-inclusion on Appendix I was data gaps in the proposals rather than the species not meeting the criteria. The River dolphin and great white shark gained Appendix I status).

Following the rejection of the US's proposal for aboriginal subsistence quotas at Shimonoseki, a Special Meeting of the IWC has been called by the US to re-address this issue. It will be held before the intersessional meeting on the RMP in mid-October. Link members harbour serious concerns about what other issues may be debated at the special meeting, such as Japan's coastal quota and Iceland's re-entry to the IWC.

Activities

22/7, 3/9 - Whaling Group meetings

External meetings

14 to 17/9 - 11th Meeting of CMS Scientific Council

18 to 24/9 - CMS CoP7

Activity Forecast

24/10 - Whaling Group meeting

7/10 - 11th Consultative Whaling Forum

Week of 14/10 - IWC Special Meeting followed by Intersessional meeting on RMS, Cambridge

Land Use Planning

At the beginning of the quarter in July Link members who had worked together lobbying against the MIP proposals celebrated when these were dropped. However discussion continued on proposals to reform the planning system at a Link meeting in August, some positive points were noted:

- There will be comprehensive map coverage within plans
- The right to be heard at an inquiry will remain
- Additional resources will be allocated to planning, £350m over 3 years
- Within development control, there had been some welcome developments on the proposals to prevent twin tracking and repeat applications
- Planning Authorities will be obliged to give reasons for approval
- There will be no 21-day deadline for consultees as had been proposed

However a considerable number of concerns were raised about Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and the lack of democratic accountability for some of these, especially where there is no directly elected tier of regional government, and where this is not likely to change for a long time. There was also discussion of LDFs and statements of community involvement and concern about the accountability and sustainability of the new planning policy documents and processes.

All PPGs will become Planning Policy statements (PPS). There is concern

that in order to shorten PPS important detail will be relegated to supporting appendices which will not have the force of a PPG and will be disregarded by planners and developers.

Business Planning Zones appeared to be still on the Government's agenda, though there appeared to be little, if any, support for them, even within the business community.

The statutory purpose for planning, or a purpose for planners, will probably be included within a bill.

Activities

1/8 - Link meeting, 6 atts from 6 orgs

Activity Forecast

10/8 - Link Land Use planning group meeting

Response to planning policy statements (if these appear)

Monitor Queen's Speech for references to planning / planning bill

Work on PPG/PPS - draft Link position statement

Draft workplan for 2003

Land Use Planning: Minerals

Early reactions from industry to the Aggregates Levy and Sustainability Fund have been disheartening, and the group aims to work through DEFRA to influence the types of projects undertaken using the Fund.

Aggregates Supply Guidelines have been published, which, although dealing largely with figures rather than policy, stick to the 'predict and provide' approach. A 24% reduction in the projected aggregates supply (compared to that forecast in MPG6) is proposed (though this still represents an increase on current supply) but the group has a number of concerns which will be expressed in a joint response. Link members had met with ODPM's Brian Marker to discuss the paper before its release, but their concerns were not taken on board at that stage.

Task Forces

MPG1 (General Considerations and the Development Plan System) and MPG6 (Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England) are both to be revised, and MPG1 is expected to come out around Christmas. No-one is certain what to expect (with the new 'improved' PPGs having been slow to appear) but the group has decided to develop 'Ten Tests' for the MPGs. The first Marine Minerals Guidance note (MMG1) has been published (Guidance on the Extraction by Dredging of Sand, Gravel and Other Minerals from the English Seabed), so Minerals group expertise may be of benefit to the Marine Task Force in the future.

Thanks to the efforts of the group's Chair, Emily Richmond, group members have been invited to WRAP's forthcoming First Aggregates Forum.

Activities

4/9 - Minerals group meeting

External meetings

11/7 - Meeting between Link and Brian Marker, Minerals and Waste Planning, ODPM

Activity Forecast

22/10 - Meeting between Link members and POS

6/11 - WRAP: First Meeting of the Aggregates Forum

Dec - European Minerals 2000 Conference

PPG 9

It looks as though work on PPG9 will commence in the fourth quarter with input from DEFRA and EN. The group's preparation for this was aided by EN's Jonathan Price's attendance at a meeting in the last quarter, and a paper will be submitted to the relevant departments in November on what Link feels PPG9 should cover.

Activity Forecast

9/10 - PPG 9 group meeting

Water Policy & Legislation

The Water Task force celebrated at the end of the quarter by submitting a response to the Environment Agency's technical consultation on Annexes 2 and 5 of the Water Framework Directive. The earlier draft response had also been used as Scottish Link's response to SEPA on their earlier similar consultation. The response is available on the Link website as a pdf.

The group expressed many concerns within the Link response that water quality standards were not being set at the right level, and that the criteria being used to define good quality were not sufficient and would lead to no improvements.

The group discussed concerns about the perception held by many people, even in the environmental sector, that streams and rivers are improving: the group have identified several criteria which indicate a worsening of biological quality of water bodies.

Activities

10/7 - Water TF meeting

Outputs

- Draft Link response to SEPA consultation forwarded to SEL

- Link response to the Environment Agency's consultation on the technical requirements of the Water Framework Directive

Activity Forecast

4/10 - Water TF meeting

Monitor Queen's Speech for water bill

AMP4 results announced

Marine Nature Conservation Task Force

The Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill collapsed when it was forced to run out of parliamentary time in the Lords.

Link members are currently considering whether, and in what form, the bill could be re-introduced.

Link representatives met with DfT over the Review of Marine Consents, and as a result plan to produce a paper to supply to the department on Spatial Planning in the marine environment.

The group is engaging actively with the RMNC, with Link representatives sitting on the RMNC working Group, the Regional Seas Pilot Steering Group, the Criteria Working Group and the Information sub-group and contributing to many of the resulting papers. The group also plans to submit a preliminary response to the Marine Stewardship Report in the next quarter. An official consultation paper on the MSR is likely to be released at a conference in November on Marine Stewardship and Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

At the last Task Force meeting Dan Lafolley of EN provided a briefing on the Jakarta Mandate on Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity, part of the Convention on Biological Diversity established at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The mandate calls for the designation of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas. Defra's John Roberts is to brief the group in October on outcomes for oceans of the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development and the EU Marine Strategy.

ICZM

The ICZM sub-group met at the end of September to discuss a Link paper on the EU Recommendation. The sub-group is currently working on a ten-point briefing paper for the November conference, summarising Link's views on how the UK should implement the EU Recommendation.

Activities

16/7 - Meeting with John Roberts, DEFRA, on WCL's Marine Charter

19/7 - Marine TF meeting

2/9 - Meeting between Link and DfT on Review of Marine Consents

Task Forces

4/9 - RMNC Regional Seas Pilot Scheme Steering Group meeting

18/9 - RMNC Criteria Working Group meeting

30/9 - ICZM sub-group, followed by Task Force meeting

Activity Forecast

16/10 - conference on Strategic Environmental Assessment in the Marine Environment

17/10 - RMNC Criteria Working Group meeting

29/10 - Marine TF meeting

29/10 - Task Force meeting with John Roberts (DEFRA) on WSSD outcomes and EU Marine Strategy

6/11 - EN's Maritime State of Nature Report launch

11/11 - RMNC Regional Seas Pilot Scheme Steering Group meeting

13/11 - RMNC Working Group meeting

14/11 - Conference: Marine Stewardship and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

Bycatch

There was some response to the lobbying of fish retailers, restaurants and manufacturers on the bycatch issue. Two letters (to our knowledge) were sent to Mr Fischler and two other responses were made to Link. Perhaps most exciting, an article entitled 'Dolphin Deaths in Fisheries' appeared in the Autumn issue of Dine Out, the magazine of the Restaurants Association.

Activity Forecast

23/10 - Bycatch meeting

Sister Links

Northern Ireland Link

Over the last few months NIEL has been busy preparing to launch an Environmental Report Card - an NGO Assessment of Northern Ireland's Environment. This should hopefully be launched in November.

The Rural Community Capacity Building Project has been working away and represented NIEL at the Green Living Fair hosted by WWT Castle Espie. The RCCBP is also busily collating the results of a survey looking at the view of rural people in Northern Ireland on the environment. Two new Environmental Fact Sheets have been produced: one on Agriculture and Rural Development, and the second on Climate Change.

NIEL Members continue to have meetings and respond to consultations documents with Government Departments and Agencies. Funding has been secured from the Arts Council for Northern Ireland to fund the post of an Artistic Facilitator - Rural Arts Project, and the post holder should be in place by November - this post will last for 18 months.

NIEL provides the secretariat for the Environmental Education Forum (EEF) and the EEF is currently preparing for Environment days - these are compulsory environmental education training days for student teachers from key stages 1-4 at the universities and colleges.

Welsh Link

WCCL changed its name to Wales Environment Link (WEL), and is currently undertaking a communications audit aimed at streamlining processes and targeting information more precisely.

WEL's Assembly Information service is running well, producing weekly bulletins and special editions that are helping to improve

strategy for influencing government thinking.

WEL is beginning to identify and build relationships with civil servants as well as Ministers, notably with the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department (ARAD), and have had representation in three Assembly-convened think-tank/working groups. Members have decided to produce a Manifesto for next year's Assembly elections, and follow this up with an "Environmental Programme for Work" for the next Assembly government.

Members will be meeting with the Welsh Development Agency later in the year to discuss their Sustainable Development policy, as well as meeting the Environment Minister in October to discuss heritage, planning, marine and sustainable development issues - positive outcomes are expected.

Scottish Link

The report card "Must Try Harder" was circulated within Scotland and brought to Johannesburg by voluntary sector delegates. An advance copy of the conference report "Managing to be Sustainable" was sent to the First Minister prior to the summit, and Scottish Link attended an open event on 30 August that addressed what civic society can do to advance sustainable development in Scotland.

In addition to the main focus areas of the Access and Water Environment Bills, Scottish Link members have continued to engage in the preparation of manifestos across the political spectrum, inputting to thinking on the Lib Dem, Conservative, SNP, Green Party manifestos, with Labour Party activities coming up in October.

Organisational Development

Working Groups

Farming and Rural Development

Chair: Martin Harper
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Sec: Pippa Langford
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Land Use Planning

Chair: Mark Southgate
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Sec: Pippa Langford
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Forestry: Hilary Allison
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Minerals: Emily Richmond
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PPG 9: Tony Gent
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Sec: Annie Smith
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Wildlife and Trade

Chair: Rob Atkinson
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Whaling/IWC: Mark Simmonds
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Sec: Annie Smith
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Task Forces

Marine Nature Conservation

Chair: Sam Fanshawe
(sam@mcsuk.org)

Bycatch: Ali Ross
(xbs54@dial.pipex.com)

Sec: Annie Smith
(annie@wcl.org.uk)

Water Policy and Legislation

Chair: Rob Cunningham
(robert@waterteam.cix.co.uk)

Sec: Pippa Langford
(pippa@wcl.org.uk)

One-off Initiatives

Access to the Countryside

Using Europe to Further Nature Conservation in the UK

Future of Commonland in England and Wales

Sec: Pippa Langford
(pippa@wcl.org.uk)

Planning for 2003

The review of current work areas has been completed. Lots of members completed questionnaires about working with Link - the results are helpful to the Secretariat and the Chairs of the groups, and will enable us to provide an even better service for you in the future. However, if you have a suggestion please don't hesitate to email Link at any time.

The questionnaire asking for new work areas got a good response: suggestions included development of brownfield sites, bovine TB, and cetaceans and Biodiversity, which received the most support from members. All suggestions were considered at the Management Committee meeting in September, and the full recommendations from this meeting will be circulated soon within the AGM papers.

AGM

The Link AGM is on Friday 13th December 3-5pm and will be followed by drinks. Each member of Link can send a nominated person to vote at the meeting, and others can attend as observers. Jen will be contacting all the members to ask for the name of your nominated person and to find out who will be coming to the AGM.

Every year Link elects a Management Committee of five people, plus a Chair Deputy Chair and Treasurer. Most members can serve a maximum of three years, the Chair and Deputy five years maximum. If you are interested in getting to know Link better, serving on the Management Committee is interesting. You would have to attend our quarterly meetings, plus the next AGM. If you are interested and want to know more – please contact Pippa Langford, and watch out for the nomination forms which will come out soon.

Other Link News

This quarter saw the arrival of Annie Smith as the new Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator. Annie has settled in quickly and is grateful for all the friendly support from the Link members.

Link's offices have been rearranged internally, giving us enough space for a small meeting area – members who've seen the office since the new arrangements have commented that the office looks a lot bigger now – it is certainly more comfortable!

One last piece of good news, Jen is expecting a baby in February. She'll be going on maternity leave after Christmas. We'll be advertising for maternity cover in early November – but if you know of anyone suitable, please let them know. Would any member like to consider a staff secondment to Link?