

E-bulletin September 2015

Welcome to Link's September 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 [Emma](#).



Farming Fit for the Future and Water Matters

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The Parliamentary launch of the two publications 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 about the importance of taking an integrated approach ([read speech here](#)) and Link's Director, Dr Elaine King, highlighted the need to work together to deliver our shared ambitions, in enhancing the natural environment for people, wildlife and the economy ([read speech here](#)). Farmer Tim Farr emphasized the need to take swift action when it is needed.

The event and the publications have generated a great deal of positive interest and Link will now be setting up meetings with Government and other interested parties with a view to taking forward our recommendations.

Link Staff Updates

Link has three vacancies for full time positions based in London: Head of Policy and Campaigns, Marine Policy and Campaigns Manager and a Policy and Campaigns Manager. Applications are now open and the deadline is 12 October. For more information please visit our [vacancies page](#).

Link is pleased to welcome Carmen Naves to our team. Carmen will begin her role as a part time Policy and Campaigns Coordinator in early October, providing interim support for working groups while Link is recruiting.

Communications

Link and its member organisations worked together to achieve excellent media coverage of our Water Matters and Farming fit for the Future publications, which launched on 15 September at a Parliamentary Reception hosted by Zac Goldsmith MP. We were pleased to welcome Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP. A feature on BBC Breakfast, secured by The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, was a great example of a joint sector voice as it included spokespeople from the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, The Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust. The mention of a range of other Link members throughout the report demonstrated environmental organisations working collaboratively to raise awareness of shared concerns. The press release, distributed in advance of publication, was picked up by national and local media with most publishing quotes from the Chairs

of the Agriculture Working Group and the Water Working Group, together with a quote from Link's Director, Dr Elaine King.

A number of member organisations blogged about the water and farming visions and many shared the publications on social media. Independent blogger Mark Avery produced three blogs; one about each publication and one about the Parliamentary launch. All of the coverage and the launch itself were strengthened by proactive stakeholder engagement. Farmers, water regulators and key decision makers were all present at the event. A comprehensive range of case studies brought the issues to life and were integral to the positive media coverage that resulted.

Also in September Matt Shardlow, Chair of Link's Legal Strategy Group and CEO of Buglife, was quoted in a number of publications expressing concern over proposed changes to Judicial Review laws, which he said could penalise donors to charities. Vice-Chair of the Group, Carol Day was also interviewed on this issue by Planning Resource.

Towards the end of the month, Link issued a reactive press statement from a number of members in response to the Government's response to the Natural Capital Committee's Third Report.

Joint Links Update

For a quarterly update from our sister Links please [click here](#).

2015 AGM and Annual Debate

Link's 2015 AGM and Annual Debate are scheduled for 9 December, at WWF's Living Planet Centre in Woking. Make sure to save the date! This year's debate, open to both members and non-members, will focus on the EU Referendum. Further information will be circulated shortly.



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Group Updates

This month Link [responded](#) to the Government's [consultation](#) on proposed changes to licences issued by Natural England to kill badgers as part of its bovine TB (bTB) control programme. While recognising the positive action that Defra is taking to control bTB in cattle, such as cattle movement restrictions and improved testing regimes, Link expressed concern that the Government continues to show a misplaced emphasis on killing badgers, particularly when independent scientific opinion casts doubt on its effectiveness in controlling bTB in cattle.

Link's response, supported by 15 Link members, urged the Government not to introduce the proposed measures, which it believes relax the criteria required for a culling licence to be issued, with no evidence provided to suggest that the changes will improve the likelihood of disease being prevented.



APPG Meeting

The Group is currently planning an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) event, taking place on 20 October. Presentations will be delivered by Stanley Johnson (author and politician) and Kate Jennings (Chair of Link's Habitats and Birds Group) along with other relevant stakeholders. The event hopes to influence the current political environment in the run up to the Ministerial level consultation on the Directives in Brussels on 20 November.

Joint Links Letter to the EC Commissioners

Joint Links have sent a [letter](#) to the EC Commissioners, the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP and Minister Rory Stewart MP highlighting the UK's support for the Habitats and Birds Directives. The letter asked the Commissioners to continue their work on protecting the environment by fully delivering on the objectives of the Habitats and Birds Directive as well as the EU Biodiversity Strategy and Lisbon Treaty.



Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee

On 12 October, former Defra official Alistair McGlone will be presenting to the Legal Strategy Group on the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee. Alistair's presentation will cover the purpose of the Committee, how to submit an effective communication and why voluntary organisations may wish to do so. Alistair will also be offering some valuable insights into working as a senior lawyer within Defra. The presentation will run between 13.00 and 14.00 and places may be limited. Please

contact [Emma](#) to book your place if you do not normally attend the Group's meetings. **Please note attendance is restricted to Link members only.**

Ministry of Justice consultation on Judicial Review

The Legal Strategy Group submitted a response to the Ministry of Justice consultation on the Provision and Use of Financial Information in Judicial Review (JR). If enacted, the proposals would require claimants to provide information about third parties providing funding towards the costs of litigation in excess of £1,500 and, in other situations, information about charity members/supporters. Link is concerned that these proposals may create profound difficulties for the nature of charity funding, by both threatening the general funding available to charities and reducing the ability and willingness of charities to pursue JR. Link's response was endorsed by 15 members.

Two days after the consultation closed, the Ministry of Justice launched a related consultation on Costs Protection in Environmental Claims. The proposals could undermine the regime for environmental cases in a number of ways, yet they also bring in certain statutory reviews into the Aarhus costs regime. The Legal Strategy group will discuss the proposals at its next meeting on 12 October and plans to submit a response to the consultation.

Wildlife Law Reform

The Law Commission has reported that it is not in a position to publish the final report and draft Bill on wildlife law reform until October. The group therefore expects to report on this activity next month.



Housing Bill

The Housing Bill is due in October. Although it focuses on housing, the bill could bring about a number of quite radical changes to the planning system. The Land Use Planning group has its next meeting on 3 November to discuss amendments and the way forward. Please get in touch with [Victoria](#) if you are interested in contributing to work.



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Working Group Meeting

In September the Whales Working Group held a productive meeting at which a range of issues were discussed, including matters relating to the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the 2016 Conference of the Parties to CITES and the protection of marine mammals in UK waters. The meeting was followed by one with Nigel Gooding, Head of the UK Delegation to the IWC. Discussion included matters arising from the recent IWC Scientific Committee meeting, and whaling by Iceland, Japan, Norway and the Faroe Islands. The Whales Group will meet again October to further deliberate on issues including ASCOBANS and cetacean bycatch.

Petition to the Prime Minister

Members of the Whales Working Group have jointly launched a petition on the Government petition website, calling on the UK Government to take strong diplomatic action against the whaling nations of Japan, Iceland and Norway. The Government has provided a response which can be found on the petition website. Please [click here](#) to sign the petition and support the campaign.



Group Meeting

The Group held a very productive exploratory teleconference on 17 August, followed by a full meeting on 14 September. The September meeting included a session with Shirley Trundle, Defra Director for Countryside and Nature, who gave a very helpful update on the Government's progress and thinking around a 25 year strategy for the natural environment, particularly with regards to stakeholder engagement, the plan's scope, and a timetable for delivery.

Defra workshop

The Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, has invited Link's Director, Elaine King, and a number of Link members, to contribute to the first of a number of engagement events on 12 October. The event will discuss the Government's 25 year strategy and framework for the environment and will include identifying key challenges and opportunities along with means by which work can be better integrated.

Natural Capital Committee report

On 22 September, the Government published its [response](#) to the 3rd [report](#) of the Natural Capital Committee. Link issued a [news release](#), applauding the Committee's work in highlighting the urgent

economic need to turn round declines in the natural environment. Link also welcomed the Government's response as a step forward, but pointed out that economic and social opportunities will continue to be missed unless the value of nature is taken into account across Government. Link also stressed the need for the Natural Capital Committee, soon to be re-established by the Government, to be given new independence, new authority and new resources.



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