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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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Letter from the Chair...

Dear Link members

This quarter as well as the usual level of activity across all of Link's working areas Link welcomed the publication of the draft Marine Bill. This signalled a period of intense activity from Link's Marine Task Force involving two submissions of written evidence, oral evidence and a response to Defra's public consultation. Link welcomed the publication of the Bill but continues to reiterate our call for the introduction of a full Bill into Parliament as soon as possible. As a result, we welcome the inclusion of the Marine and Coastal Access Bill in the Draft Legislative Programme (DLP), also published during the quarter.

The Land Use Planning Working Group has also been active this quarter - eco-towns have generated a huge amount of public interest and Link has developed its own position statement on eco-towns. This ensured that Link was in a position to submit a response during the quarter both to the Government consultation and to submit evidence to a parliamentary inquiry on the same topic. As ever, Link continues to monitor this issue with interest.

In addition, the Land Use Planning Working Group has also been focussing on the Sub-National Review consultation. Our concerns are that the proposed reforms, which will be taken forward within the Community Empowerment Bill also announced in the DLP, are focussed too narrowly on economic performance and pose a significant threat to the natural environment. Link's consultation response and subsequent letters to Government have the support of a substantial number of Link members and this is therefore likely to remain an issue of key concern to Link in the coming months.

Lastly, you will be aware that Alexia Wellbelove, Link's current Director has announced her intention to leave Link at the end of September after almost four years in the role. I am currently in the process of recruiting her replacement and will keep you all informed of progress. If you know of potential applicants do refer them to the Link website for more details: <http://www.wcl.org.uk/Vacancies.htm>

Best wishes



Paul de Zylva

Working Groups



Chair: Nigel Bourn, Butterfly Conservation
Vice Chair: Nicola Hutchinson, Plantlife
Secretary: Jodie Bettis

Biodiversity

Throughout April Link members were busy inputting to a number of papers in the run up to the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee meeting in late April, at which Link was represented.

In May Link was delighted to report that our annual assessment of the progress towards the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss prompted the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) to launch an inquiry into '*Biodiversity in a Changing Britain*'. Link submitted written evidence summarising our key concerns and recommendations, and a number of Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) members were called to give oral evidence.

The BWG held a meeting in June to discuss, among other things, the EAC biodiversity inquiry, and the recently published Section 41 list of species and habitats of principal importance in England under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

During the quarter Link attended a number of external biodiversity forum meetings including; the England Biodiversity Strategy (EBS) Local and Regional Strategy Implementation Group; the Biodiversity Reporting & Information Group (BRIG); the UK Standing Committee and; the England Biodiversity Group (EBG) at which the revised EBS / Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) framework was discussed.



Chair: Ian Woodhurst, CPRE
Vice Chair: Gareth Morgan, RSPB
Secretary: Alexia Wellbelove

Farming and Rural Development

The quarter began with Link being represented at both the AESG meeting and the Nutrient Management meeting. On 22nd April Natural England took Link members on a farm visit to learn more about the preparation of a Farm Environment Plan (FEP).

In May Link submitted a response to the EU Budget Review consultation. Link also submitted a copy of our bioenergy policy document, '*Bioenergy in the UK*', as evidence to the Renewable Fuels Agency review into the indirect effects of biofuels - the 'Gallagher Review'.

Following the publication of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Health Check Proposals by the European Commission, Defra launched a consultation on 11th June inviting views on the proposed Health Check reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy and their potential impacts on the UK. Link's response will provide an additional opportunity to follow up our policy perspective on the future of the CAP - '*Beyond the Pillars*', which we published in March. The document can be downloaded at http://www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2008/Link_Beyond_the_Pillars_11Mar08.pdf

Throughout June Link representatives attended a number of external meetings on Cross Compliance, the RDPE's Programme Monitoring Committee, and a high level CAP Health Check Stakeholder meeting.

Working Groups



Badgers

Following the Welsh Assembly's announcement on 9th April that they will be endorsing a trial badger cull in a 'bovine TB hotspot' in Wales, Link members are still awaiting a decision from Defra. No further information has been released at this time, and it is understood that due to the complexity of the issue the Government is still considering its response to the recent Environment Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee report which has been delayed, with no date yet published as to when this will be available.



Woodland

On 1st May the Forestry Commission held a workshop on developing the Delivery Plan for the Government's strategy, *England's Trees, Woods, and Forests Strategy*.

On 29th May the Forestry Commission's published its consultation on ancient woodland. Link will be considering its response to this issue in time for the deadline on 22nd August.

Chair: Mike Wood, RSPB
Vice Chair: James Cooper, Woodland Trust
Secretary: Alexia Wellbelove



Land Use Planning

The Land Use Planning Working Group (LUPWG) met at the beginning of April to discuss progress on the Planning Bill, eco-towns and the Sub National Review consultation. The Report stage of the Planning Bill began in the House of Commons on 2nd June, and although subsequent sessions to conclude this stage had been delayed, they resumed on 25th June.

Following the announcement of the Government's consultation on taking forward its eco-towns programme and the shortlist of proposed sites, entitled '*Living a greener future*', Link submitted a response in line with our recently published [position paper](#) on the subject. Link has also submitted evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into '*Greener Homes for the Future*', which held its last oral evidence session at the beginning of June.

In June Link submitted its [response](#) to the Government's consultation document on the Sub National Review, '*Prosperous Places*' with support from 18 member organisations.

The LUPWG is currently looking into how funds generated by the Government's proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be used to fund habitat creation and other green infrastructure projects. The group is working on a briefing/position paper on CIL, which will be available for download from our website soon.

Chair: Fiona Mahon, The Wildlife Trusts
Vice Chair: Simon Marsh, RSPB
Secretary: Jodie Bettis

Working Groups



Strategy Chair: Tom Le Quesne, WWF
Campaigns Chair: Danny Stone, RSPB
Policy Chair: Sarah Oppenheimer, RSPB
Vice Chair (Strategy): Helen Meech, National Trust
Secretary: Jodie Bettis

Water

The Water Working Group (Policy) held a meeting in April to discuss the suite of Defra consultations including those relating to the proposals outlined in the Government's Water Strategy - 'Future Water' - and Volume 2 of the River Basin Planning Guidance. During the quarter, Link responded to all four of these consultations. The responses can be downloaded from the [Water section](#) on our website.

The Water Working Group (Campaigns) also met in April to discuss the Blueprint for Water advocacy and media strategies. Plans for a parliamentary roundtable meeting on the 2009 Periodic Review of Water Prices (PR09) in July were also discussed. This Blueprint for Water event will bring together key stakeholders, including representatives from the water sector, the water regulator, NGOs, Natural England and the Environment Agency, to debate the opportunities and challenges PR09 presents.

Link members met with the Environment Agency and Natural England in April to continue dialogue on the progress and priorities for PR09 and Blueprint for Water coalition members continue to meet with key Parliamentary contacts to share plans for the next steps in their campaign to promote the sustainable management of water for the benefit of the environment and water consumers.

Link also attended a meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group to the Pitt Review on 10th June, whose final report will be published later this month.



Chair: Jennifer Lonsdale, Environmental Investigation Agency
Vice Chair: Claire Bass, WSPA
Secretary: Alexia Wellbelove

Whales

In June the 60th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC60) commenced in Chile. During the quarter, Link prepared a detailed briefing in advance of this meeting, which included its vision for the future of the IWC 'The IWC - modernisation to avoid extinction' as published in November 2007. The Whales Working Group also met with the Minister in early May to discuss the briefing, which calls on the IWC to adopt conservation as its primary focus, in order to address the recovery of threatened and endangered populations of cetaceans and ensure that no further populations of cetaceans are put at risk. Two representatives from Link were included in the UK delegation to the plenary stage of IWC60, in addition to four further Link representatives included in the UK's delgation to the IWC's Scientific Committee.

In May Link received a response to the two letters sent to Defra in April, requesting that the confidential nature of papers to the Scientific Committee meeting be removed, and for a change in timing of the Scientific Committee and Commission meetings. Although these were recognised as good points, it was suggested by Defra that it would be unwise for the UK to take a lead on them at the present time.

In April Link also received a response from the Royal Navy regarding the use of sonar 2087, an issue on which Link members continue to work.

Working Groups



Chair: Rob Atkinson, RSPCA
Vice Chair: Cathy Williamson, Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society
Secretary: Alexia Wellbelove

Wildlife and Trade

In April Link sent a letter to the Minister, Joan Ruddock MP, regarding the bird registration scheme, reiterating our call for the registration of non-native species in the scheme for conservation purposes. A response to this letter was received in June, in which Joan Ruddock informed Link that she felt further regulatory controls on top of the EU ban on wild imports, would not assist in the conservation of these species.

Members of the Wildlife and Trade Working Group attended the Defra Joint Liaison Group meeting on 10th June, at which updates from recent EU and CITES meetings were provided together with an update on legislation. A detailed discussion of the forthcoming meetings (particularly the EU Management Committee and CITES Standing Committee) was also held, with Link members raising key issues for the UK.

Task Forces



Chair: Joan Edwards, The Wildlife Trusts
Vice Chair: Sharon Thompson, RSPB
Secretary: Joanna Butler

Marine

At the beginning of the quarter Link sent out its 5th Parliamentary Bulletin to parliamentarians in advance of the draft Marine Bill launch, which highlighted the need for a joined-up approach between the draft Marine Bill and the other Bills currently passing through Parliament impacting the marine environment. This is available from our website from the following link: http://www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2008/Link_Marine_parliamentary_Bulletin_5.pdf

The draft Marine Bill was published on 3rd April for pre-legislative scrutiny and consultation. The MTF held meetings on 24th and 25th April to discuss its response to the draft Bill. A series of policy sub-groups were established at these meetings to work on the various aspects of the draft Bill. The MTF met with Defra on 6th and 8th May to discuss the draft Bill and to help inform their responses to it. The MTF also met with Natural England on 22nd May to discuss the nature conservation provisions of the draft Bill.

In May, a Joint Committee made up of 11 MPs and 11 Peers was established on the draft Bill and invited the submission of written evidence by 16th June. Link submitted written evidence in advance of this deadline at the end of May to ensure that our evidence could be considered before oral evidence sessions began at the beginning of June. Link members gave oral evidence to the Joint Committee on 25th June.

On 3rd June, Link members attended a Joint All Party Parliamentary Group Meeting, at which Jonathan Shaw and Defra's Marine Bill team talked through the main elements of the draft Bill. Link members also attended Natural England's summer reception on the marine environment, which took place on 11th June.

Following the hard work of the MTF sub-groups, which were established in April, Link submitted its response to Defra's public consultation on the draft Bill, which closed on 26th June. In addition, the MTF also submitted written evidence to the EFRA Committee on the coastal access provisions within the draft Marine Bill.

Link has worked with the Seabed User and Developer Group (SUDG) to develop a joint statement on the draft Bill, demonstrating that both environmental NGOs and industry are united in their support for the

draft Bill but believe that improvements still need to be made in order to ensure that the final Bill delivers sustainable development of the marine environment.

Following pre-legislative scrutiny and Defra's public consultation, the Government may make amendments to the draft Bill in preparation for the introduction of a full Marine Bill to Parliament. Whilst it is not guaranteed, the inclusion of the Marine Bill in the Draft Legislative Programme in May is a good indication that the Marine Bill will be included in the forthcoming Queen's Speech (3rd December) and introduced into Parliament shortly after that.



Sister Links



LINK taskforces and sub groups have been busy responding to a variety of Scottish Government consultations as follows:

Agriculture: In April the Agriculture Taskforce submitted a response to the [National Food Policy Discussion Paper](#) and stated that the environmental aspects of the policy had been underplayed.

Biodiversity: In April the Biodiversity taskforce welcomed the emphasis given to appropriate land management in its response to the Scottish Government consultation on [Guidance for Prevention of Spread of Ragwort](#).

Climate: In April, the Climate Taskforce submitted a response to the consultation on the [Scottish Climate Bill](#), and in May gave a [Briefing Paper](#) on climate change for the debate in the Scottish Parliament debate. The Climate taskforce backs the main asks of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and provides policy support for the group.

Flooding: In April, the Freshwater task force submitted responses to the proposal for new flooding legislation the [future of flood risk management](#) in Scotland and to the report on the [Significant Water Management Issues Report](#) for Scotland River Basin District. In June, it submitted a [Briefing Paper](#) for the Scottish Parliament Rural Affairs and Environment Committee debate on flooding and flood management.

Marine: With consultation on the Scottish Marine Bill running from July to October, LINK's campaign officer, together with colleagues within the LINK network and various partner organisations, has been working on a variety of events to raise support for our campaign asks to be included in a Scottish Marine Bill, including a stand at 30 centres and festivals throughout Scotland; distribution of 50,000 petition leaflets through over 20 organisations; and an [on-line action](#).

In June, LINK submitted a response to the consultation on the [Draft UK Marine Bill](#).

In May, the Marine Taskforce gave a response to the [Shetland Marine Spatial Plan](#) developed by the Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative (SSMEI), and in June submitted a response to the proposed [Marine Reserve in Lamlash Bay](#), Isle of Arran, and [gave written evidence](#) to the Joint Committee on the Draft Marine Bill.

LINK as a whole gave a response to Scottish Government consultation on the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Lasting [Legacy](#) for Scotland in May and has two representatives on the newly formed Legacy Board.

Continuing its quarterly ministerial meetings, LINK met with Michael Russell MSP in early May and issues discussed included climate, deer, marine and funding for the environment.

Sister Links



Wales Environment LINK (WEL)

In April WEL's Marine Working Group held a successful reception at the Assembly, to inform Assembly Members and external stakeholders about the Marine Bill and its implications for Wales. The Group has since been busy drafting WEL's Marine Working Group response to the Marine Bill consultation.

Other policy work during the past three months has included:

- Provision of feedback on the Draft Environment Strategy for Wales Action Plan, before it goes out to consultation;
- Giving of oral evidence to the Assembly's European and External Affairs Committee, on the European CAP Health Check;
- Submission of a joint response to the Welsh Assembly Government's Renewable Energy Route Map consultation;
- Production of a position statement on bovine TB, and one on Woodland and Forestry.

WEL's Advocacy Working Group have organised a seminar for WEL members, entitled 'The Government of Wales Act 2006: What now for Advocacy?', which will take place at the Assembly on the 7th of July. The main aims of this seminar are to help WEL members to gain a better understanding of GoWA 2006, and its implications; and to inform WEL members of how best to undertake – and prioritise - advocacy work within the new Assembly structures.

Additionally, WEL's Working Groups have all been compiling their workplans for the year ahead, which will be tabled for approval at WEL's AGM in July.



Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)

NIEL held its major annual conference and AGM on 18 June on the theme of Food, Farming and the Environment. At the conference we launched our **Sustainable Food Directory** as well as our **Annual Report**. We have also recently produced two Fact Sheets, one on **Northern Ireland's Historic Environment** and one on **Climate Change – the Energy Issue**.

We have been very busy with work on a number of fronts, and had a 'triple whammy' a couple weeks ago when it was announced that NI would not be getting an independent environmental protection agency (subject of an intensive five year campaign), that the NI sustainable development strategy is 'being rewritten to be in line with the Programme for Government to put the economy at the centre' and a new Minister came into post who is 'sceptical about climate change'. We have much work to do.

On the positive side we have had constructive meetings with a number of Assembly Committees and civil servants and submitted numerous consultation comments.

News from the Secretariat

Management Committee Meeting

The second Management Committee meeting of 2008 was held on 27th June 2008 at Link's offices. Issues discussed at the meeting included: Link's annual report and accounts for 2007; Link's Landscape Scale Conservation project; review of Link's Policy Directors meeting in May; review of Link's quarterly accounts from April to June 2008, and horizon scanning.

The next Management Committee meeting is scheduled for 24th September 2008 at Link's offices.

Other Link News

During the quarter Link has also been getting settled into its new office space, still on the ground floor of 89 Albert Embankment.

At the very end of this quarter Alexia announced that she will be leaving Link at the end of September, to return to Australia, after 21 years of living in the UK. Leaving drinks will be held at the end of September, but Alexia also hopes to join Link members for the Joint Links Devolution Seminar in early October for a final goodbye. We are currently recruiting for a new Director, full details of which are up on our website, so please feel free to forward details of this vacancy to any friends or colleagues you think may be interested.

Wildlife and Countryside Link

