

E-bulletin October 2014

Welcome to Link's October 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](#)



Criminal Justice and Courts Bill

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Peers voted by 219 to 186 in favour of an amendment to the Bill reversing Government plans to create a presumption that those who apply to the court to intervene in a Judicial Review case will have to pay their own costs. They also voted heavily in favour of an amendment striking down the proposal that applications for Judicial Review can be denied if the defendant can show that it is 'highly likely' that the action it took made no difference to the claimant's situation, even if unlawful. And they also voted down a proposal that applicants should be forced to give detailed information about their financial resources, which Link members said would act as a deterrent to individuals and NGOs seeking to pursue JR.

The Bill receives third reading in the Lords on 10 November and then goes back to the Commons to consider the Lords amendments. Link's Legal Strategy Group will continue to press for the majority of the clauses in Part 4 of the Bill to be removed, or at least be dis-applied to environmental claims. For further information please contact [Matt Shardlow](#).

Link REFIT Meeting

Link's REFIT Task and Finish Group, set up to address the EU review of the Habitats and Birds Directives, is meeting on 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. For more information on the meeting and/or Link's work in this issue, please contact [Morwenna McKenzie](#)

New Blueprint for Water Website and Save Our Waters Campaign Launch

On 10 of October the [Blueprint for Water](#) launched its new website and campaign for the Blueprint for Water, to coincide with the launch of the Environment Agency's River Basin Management Plans. This consultation is an important step in shaping the management of the water environment throughout England. The campaign gives members of the public a chance to [Save our Waters](#) by making our waters healthy, vibrant places for people and wildlife.

Meeting with Martin Simms, New Head of the NWCUC

On 30 October, the group met with Martin Sims, new head of the National Wildlife Crime Unit. The meeting provided an opportunity for members of the group to discuss of their work with Martin,

including lobbying for sustainable long term funding for the unit. Moving forward, the group will be holding quarterly meetings with Martin.

2014 AGM and Annual Debate

Link's 2014 AGM and Annual Debate are scheduled for 10 December at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in Barnes, London. This year's debate, open to both members and non-members, will focus on the Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitat Directives. Amongst this year's panel of experts will be Micheal O'Briain, Deputy Head of the Nature Unit at the European Commission, and David Baldock, Director at the Institute for European Environmental Policy. For further information please contact Maria@wcl.org.uk.

Joint Links Conference

The biennial Joint Links Conference took place on 22-23 October in Glasgow, hosted by Scottish Environment Link. All four sister Links ([Wildlife and Countryside Link](#), [Scottish Environment Link](#), [Northern Ireland Environment Link](#) and [Wales Environment Link](#)), as well as a number of Link member organisations, were in attendance. The conference included sessions on horizon scanning for upcoming threats and opportunities, sharing best practice and means by which the Joint Links can work even better together in the future in order to achieve more for our members.

Staff Changes at Link

Following a comprehensive handover, Morwenna McKenzie, Link's Information and Office Coordinator (IOC), is now providing maternity cover for Kirsten Loveday, our Policy and Campaigns Coordinator (PCC), who went on maternity leave in October. We wish Kirsten all the best over the coming months. In the meantime, Mo is already making a significant contribution to members' work on Agriculture, Biodiversity and the REFIT Fitness Check of the Habitats and Birds Directives. We are also pleased to welcome [Maria Ellis](#) to the Link team, who is providing part time maternity cover as Link's Information and Office Coordinator. Maria has a BA in English and an MSc in Criminology, the latter of which involved studying aspects of the UK's illegal wildlife trade. Maria has worked with Frontier – a community development and wildlife conservation NGO – and more recently worked as an Animal Collection and Rescue Officer for the RSPCA



Response to cross compliance consultation

Letter to Defra about cross compliance

In September, Link [responded](#) to Defra's request for views on the proposed cross compliance rules, and associated guidance, under the new CAP programme that will apply from January 2015. The new Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) are:

GAEC 4 – minimum soil cover

GAEC 5 – minimum land management reflecting site specific conditions to limit erosion

GAEC 6 – maintenance of soil organic matter including a ban on arable stubble burning

Link's aim is to ensure that the new GAECs are enforceable and provide a strong level of environmental protection.

On 24 October, Link wrote to Defra highlighting a WWF-UK report which complements Link's response to the new cross compliance rules relating to soil management.

Agriculture workshop

On 27 October, the Agriculture Working Group held the second workshop of its kind to discuss key components of a better food and farming system and to develop a new strategy for the future.

Letter to Liz Truss

On 13 October, 15 Link CEOs wrote to Liz Truss, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to highlight the need for a targeted approach for the environment in the New Environment Land Management Schemes. The group has also invited the Minister for a meeting to discuss NELMS.



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.

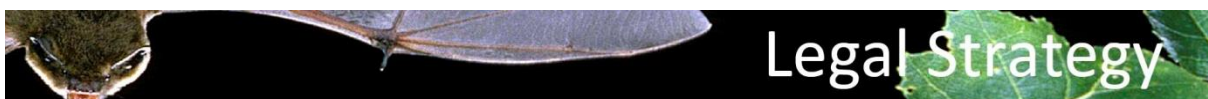


The Link INNS Task and Finish Group came to a close at the end of June. The INNS work continues but primarily outside Link. For more information about current INNS work please contact Kay Haw at the Woodland Trust: KayHaw@woodlandtrust.org.uk



Response to technical consultation

Members of the working group responded to a lengthy technical consultation on planning set up to streamline the planning system. The consultation puts forward a range of proposals to further improve the planning system and build upon the improvements already made by refining the use of planning conditions and applications.



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Infrastructure Bill

The Infrastructure Bill is at the House of Lords Report Stage. The original purpose of Clause 16 was to control Invasive Non Native Species but the scope has widened to include some native animals, resulting in certain extinct native species being erroneously defined as 'non-native'.

Amendments supported by several Link members were withdrawn at Committee after the Minister announced a consultation on a Code of Practice. Following further representations from Link members, the Government tabled amendments at Report Stage. These would address some concerns, however, it would be still possible to control native species in certain circumstances. While this might be appropriate for some unlicensed reintroductions concern remains because the amendments introduce a new Section (1B) in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which would bring wild boar within the scope of control provisions. In addition, the criteria for listing an animal in 1B are unclear.

A further concern is that Clause 16 could be in contravention of the Habitats Directive if species listed in Article 12 were included. Furthermore, an extinct species that recolonized GB could be controlled if it was having a significant impact on, eg, economic interests. Also, whilst Clause 16 would strengthen control measures for invasive non-native animals, provisions for plants would remain limited.

Link members (RSPB, ZSL, Plantlife, Client Earth and John Muir Trust) submitted questions for Report Stage with a view to pursuing further amendments in the Commons.

For more information contact Sheila Wren (sheila.wren@jmt.org) or Robin Wynde (robin.wynde@rspb.org.uk).



Joint Links marine meetings

Representatives from the Joint Links' Marine Working Groups met in Glasgow on 22-23 October as part of the Joint Links 2014 conference. Attendees discussed the good progress that has been made on Joint Links marine work and analysed the reasons for this. The marine reps also drafted a number of proposals for discussion at the next Joint Links marine meeting in London on 5 November.

Offshore Renewable Energy Licensing Group (ORELG) meeting

Link attended a meeting of the ORELG on 10 October. ORELG is a cross Governmental group set up to address the strategic regulatory challenges associated with the consenting and monitoring of offshore wind, wave and tidal power in the UK. It consists of governmental, trade and non-governmental bodies and provides a forum to discuss these issues.



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.



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Dredging up Trouble

Members of the Blueprint for Water submitted the report "[Dredging up Trouble](#)" in order to provide input into the Government's annual Autumn Statement, which will be announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, on 3 December 2014.

The report warns the Government about the potentially disastrous consequences of prioritising dredging over other proven flood-prevention measures. The report identifies 10 priority areas which would inevitably lose out if new funding is ring-fenced for dredging alone. These include protecting life and public health, natural flood management options and sustainable drainage systems.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) consultation

At the end of October the Blueprint for Water submitted a [response](#) to the SuDS consultation organised by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The response highlights the need for SuDS to mitigate surface water flooding and to provide a variety of public benefits. The Blueprint for Water is asking the Government to incorporate SuDS into all developments and for the Government to recognise fully their importance around issues such as surface water flooding. This delay to enacting widespread inclusion of SuDS into new development is costly to people, to the environment and to business.



Letter to the Minister

On 29 October Link wrote to the Minister George Eustice MP regarding the upcoming Convention on Migratory Species Conference of Parties in Quito, Ecuador, at the beginning of November. Link is calling for close collaboration between governments, non-governmental organisations and international bodies to deliver significant elements of the CMS conservation programme.



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Working group workshop

The working group held a productive workshop on 30 October to discuss a Link position on recording wildlife crimes. The group also discussed possible Link action in the run up to the UK general election.

