

E-bulletin November 2013

Welcome to Link's November 2013 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 [Morwenna](#).



Nature Check 2013

On 19 November, Link launched its [Nature Check 2013 report](#) at a parliamentary reception, hosted by Zac Goldsmith MP.

[Lord de Mauley](#), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Natural Environment and Science, gave a keynote speech followed by a lively Q&A session, with questions on subjects including Marine Conservation Zones, Invasive Non-Native Species, Bovine TB, the England Biodiversity Strategy and the EU budget.

Nature Check 2013 is Link's third assessment of the Coalition Government's delivery against its commitments towards the natural environment. The report builds on the results from Nature Check 2011 and 2012, and finds that, although some policies are delivering positive results, the Government's delivery for the natural environment over the last year has remained static. Publication of the report coincided with a [ComRes poll](#), commissioned by Link which found that more than nine in ten British adults agree that the countryside is a national treasure, and that we should improve the condition of the natural environment for future generations.

The launch was very well attended by parliamentarians, government officials, Link members, and other stakeholders. Link's Director, Dr Elaine King, reminded us why we are all passionate about nature, in addition to highlighting that the natural environment is not an optional luxury, but is critical to a thriving economy and to the health and wellbeing of millions of people. She called on the Government to show leadership for the natural environment and to be clear on what action the Government will now take to invest in our natural wealth as the economy slowly recovers. Lord de Mauley noted that Link members have great expertise and passion on environmental issues, saying "You have a vital role to play and are potentially the most powerful ally we have to deliver growth while improving the environment."

Nature Check 2013 attracted widespread media coverage. Broadcast media included BBC1 Breakfast, Five Live and the Today Programme on Radio 4, with estimated audience figures of over 10 million. More than 130 articles were generated in written media, with a readership of around 22.5 million.

More information on Nature Check 2013, including the report, ComRes poll and speeches from the launch can be found on [Link's website](#).

Marine Conservation Zone designations

On 21 November, Link's Director, Dr Elaine King, and a number of Link members, attended a launch event of Defra's [announcement](#) to designate 27 Marine Conservation Zones around the coast of England. In making the announcement, the Minister, [George Eustice MP](#), Parliamentary Under

Secretary for Farming, Food and Marine Environment, also outlined a timetable to designate two further tranches of sites over the next three years. This development follows a robust and long-running campaign by Link's Marine Working Group. Further work is still required to ensure the newly designated MCZs are well protected and that the network of sites is ecologically coherent. An interactive map showing the location of these sites can be found on the [JNCC website](#).

Defra CAP consultation

On 28 November, Link submitted its [response](#) to Defra's [consultation](#) on CAP implementation in England for 2015 to 2020. The consultation covers: rural economic growth; improving farm competitiveness; protecting the natural environment; and protecting pollinators.

Link's [response](#) to the consultation, supported by 19 member organisations, calls on Defra to:

- Modulate the maximum 15% from Pillar I into Pillar II;
 - Prioritise agri-environment schemes in the next Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE);
 - Take an ambitious approach to Pillar I greening requirements, via a National Certification Scheme (NCS).
-

Green Paper on Biodiversity Offsetting

This month Link submitted its [response](#) to Defra's [Green Paper on Biodiversity Offsetting](#). The response, supported by 15 members, notes that the current development control system is failing to deal with the decline in our wildlife, habitats and landscape character. It points out that conservation benefits could be achieved through a more systematic approach to assessing the potential harm to biodiversity from development.

However, Link believes that there are significant risks associated with offsetting. These include the difficulties of recreating habitats, and the danger that a market-led approach would separate available offsets from the scientific assessment of both conservation need and the local, social value of biodiversity and landscape. Link's response also outlines a number of key principles which must be followed if offsetting is to contribute to biodiversity objectives.

Annual General Meeting and Annual Debate

Link's 2013 AGM and Annual Debate will take place on Wednesday 4 December at the Zoological Society of London.

The AGM is for Link member organisations, but the Annual Debate is open to all. This year, an expert panel will address the question: *UK natural environment: evidence-based policy or policy-based evidence?*

The debate will be chaired by Professor David Macdonald, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, at the Department of Zoology, Oxford University. Our panel of experts comprises:

- Dr Mark Avery (Independent environmental expert, former Conservation Director, RSPB)
- Dr Peter Brotherton (Deputy Chief Scientist, Natural England)

- Dr Gemma Harper (Deputy Director for Animal & Plant Health Evidence and Analysis, and Chief Social Researcher, Defra)
- Professor Susan Owens (Professor of Environment and Policy, University of Cambridge)
- Professor Bill Sutherland (Professor of Conservation Biology, University of Cambridge)

The debate will take place from 4.00pm to 5.30pm and will be followed by a drinks reception sponsored by the British Ecological Society.

Changes in the Link team

We are very sad to be saying goodbye to Louise Hartley, Link's Information and Office Coordinator (IOC), who will be leaving in early December. In the two years that Louise has worked for Link, she has been hugely efficient in the IOC role, while also making a significant contribution to Link's policy work, especially in providing secretariat support to the Wildlife Trade Working Group and developing Link's work on animal welfare, bovine TB and forests.

Louise will be staying in the Link family, in her new role as Projects Coordinator in the Conservation Technology Unit at the Zoological Society of London. We thank Louise for the huge contribution she has made at Link, and wish her every success for the future.

We are pleased to welcome Morwenna Mckenzie as Link's new IOC. Morwenna has just finished her Masters in Marine Ecology and Environmental Management at Queen Mary, University of London, and is currently benefitting from a comprehensive handover from Louise.



Defra CAP consultation

On 28 November, Link submitted its [response](#) to Defra's [consultation](#) on CAP implementation in England for 2015 to 2020. The consultation covers: rural economic growth; improving farm competitiveness; protecting the natural environment; and protecting pollinators.

Link's [response](#) to the consultation, supported by 19 member organisations, calls on Defra to:

- Modulate the maximum 15% from Pillar I into Pillar II;
- Prioritise agri-environment schemes in the next Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE);
- Take an ambitious approach to Pillar I greening requirements, via a National Certification Scheme (NCS).

The [Natural Capital Committee](#) has also [responded](#) to the consultation, stating, "The NCC strongly agrees with the Government's proposal to use the maximum level (15 per cent) of 'inter-pillar transfers' from Pillar 1 (which currently accounts for more than 70% of the CAP budget) to Pillar 2. As the Government's evidence paper clearly establishes, the value for money of expenditure on Pillar 2 programmes, where the provision of genuine public goods is the main aim, greatly exceeds that from income support payments under Pillar 1. A higher level of transfer would, therefore, generate better value for money and the NCC would strongly support efforts to achieve this in the future."

On the division of expenditure within Pillar 2, the NCC says, “Given the serious challenges we face in conserving and enhancing our natural assets in England and the Government’s commitment to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state that it inherited, the Committee is of the view that we should exploit the opportunity to invest as much as possible of the available funding in environmental enhancement measures.”

Select committee EFRA response

Link is currently developing its response to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee [inquiry](#) on food security. The aim of the inquiry is to follow up on issues raised at an earlier inquiry in 2009. Link’s response will include our key messages as outlined in [Sustainable and Secure](#). The deadline for responses is the 10 December.

Agriculture Working Group meeting

The Agriculture working group held a meeting on 8 November, primarily to discuss Link’s [response](#) to the [CAP consultation](#).



Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG) meeting

The next TBG meeting is due to take place on the 11 December. Frances Winder (Woodland Trust) will be attending the meeting on behalf of Link.



Cost of dealing with INNS

Link is collating information on member’s annual expenditure on the prevention, eradication and management of INNS. We will be sharing this information with parliamentarians and officials in due course.

Joint Links

Link will be liaising with [Scottish Environment Link](#) and [Wales Environment Link](#) in order to establish a clear picture of action being carried out on INNS across the UK.

GB strategy review workshops

The GB Non-Native Species Secretariat held two [workshops](#) on the [GB strategy review 2013](#), on 28 October and 12 November, which were attended by Link and a number of our members. The aims of the workshops are to consider: the relevance of the GB Strategy’s current objectives in light of future priorities; to review progress against each theme; and to consider what changes could be made to improve the delivery of the GB Strategy’s objectives.

Next task and finish group meeting

The next INNS group meeting is scheduled for 12 December. The agenda will include a discussion of Defra’s workshops on the GB Strategy Review, an update on the progress of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien species and a discussion on the relationship between plant and animal health and INNS control.

Meeting with Defra on 16 December

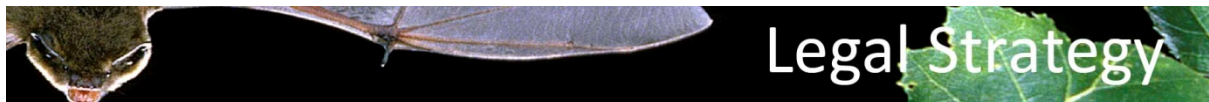
On 16 December Link members will be meeting with Defra officials in Bristol to discuss the progress of the GB Strategy Review, and to reflect on the GB Strategy Review workshops.



Link responds to the Green Paper on Biodiversity Offsetting

This month Link submitted its [response](#) to Defra's [Green Paper on biodiversity offsetting](#). The response, supported by 15 members, notes that the current development control system is failing to deal with the decline in our wildlife, habitats and landscape character. It points out that conservation benefits could be achieved through a more systematic approach to assessing the potential harm to biodiversity from development.

However, Link believes that there are significant risks associated with offsetting. These include the difficulties of recreating habitats, and the danger that a market-led approach would separate available offsets from the scientific assessment of both conservation need and the local, social value of biodiversity and landscape. Link's response also outlines a number of key principles which must be followed if offsetting is to contribute to biodiversity objectives.



Judicial Review - Proposals for Further Reform

Link has submitted evidence to the [Ministry of Justice's consultation](#) on further reform to Judicial Review (JR). JR provides an effective mechanism for challenging the decisions, acts or omissions of public bodies to ensure that they are lawful.

In its response Link expresses concern that the Government's proposals represent a mistaken belief that JR is nothing more than an irritant to economic growth and recovery and asserts that they are a disproportionate response to perceived problems. Link also points out that the proposals will prevent compliance with EU and international environmental law and warns that it is only a matter of time before the UK will again find itself before the Aarhus Compliance Committee and the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Draft Aarhus National Implementation Report

Link has [responded](#) to Defra's [consultation](#) on its Draft Aarhus National Implementation Report (NIR). The Aarhus Convention is a United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) treaty which provides access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice in environmental matters. The UK is required to produce a NIR every three years, outlining the procedures and mechanisms facilitating the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, and providing examples of the practical steps being taken to implement the requirements of the Convention in the UK.

Link's response, supported by 14 members, points out that the NIR fails to provide an accurate reflection of the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the UK, and urges the Government to amend the NIR accordingly.

Link's overarching concern is the unprecedented scale and pace of legislative and policy change in the UK and the fact that the NIR fails to reflect concerns raised by individuals and organisations struggling to keep abreast of the proposed changes or to submit properly considered responses to them. Link also points out that the NIR fails to refer to a number of both actual and proposed changes, many of which will undermine the UK's ability to comply with the Aarhus Convention. Such changes include: developments in the field of access to information; changes to public engagement in the planning regime; and proposals to reform Judicial Review.

Balance of Competences Review

In August Link coordinated a Joint Link's [response](#) to Defra's [consultation](#) on the Environment and Climate Change part of the Balance of Competences Review. The subsequent report will be published in December 2013.

Defra is also leading on Balance of Competences reports on [Agriculture](#) and [Fisheries](#). The consultation period for these reports closes on 13 January 2014.



Marine Conservation Zone designations

On 21 November, Link's Director, Dr Elaine King, and a number of Link members, attended a launch event of Defra's [announcement](#) to designate 27 Marine Conservation Zones around the coast of England. In making the announcement, the Minister, [George Eustice MP](#), Parliamentary Under Secretary for Farming, Food and Marine Environment also outlined a timetable to designate two further tranches of sites over the next three years. This development follows a robust and long-running campaign by Link's Marine Working Group. Further work is still required to ensure the newly designated MCZs are well protected and that the network of sites is ecologically coherent. An interactive map showing the location of these sites can be found on the [JNCC website](#).

Letter to George Eustice

Link's Marine Working Group wrote to the new Minister George Eustice in early November to welcome him to his new role, to outline Link's marine conservation priorities and to seek a meeting.

Marine Working Group teleconference

Link's Marine Working Group held a teleconference on 8 November to discuss a range of issues including MCZs, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the group's work plan for 2014-15.

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) meeting with Defra

On 7 November Link met with Dominic Pattinson, Head of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive implementation team at Defra, for a meeting to discuss Defra's approach to the consultation on MSFD monitoring programmes and approach to the development of programme of measures. Link also questioned Defra about the links between the Directive and the development of marine planning in England.

Polyisobutylene (PIB)

On 20 November Link wrote to Stephen Hammond MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, to thank him for his work within the International Maritime Organisation to achieve a ban on the discharge of polyisobutylene (PIB) at sea. Link also provided further written evidence to the

Transport Committee highlighting the reclassification of high-viscosity and highly reactive forms of polyisobutylene (PIB) to Category X under Annex II of the MARPOL Convention.

Marine Conservation Society marine communications workshop

On 22 November Link attended a marine communications workshop hosted by the Marine Conservation Society. The workshop brought together policy and media officers from a number of Link members who discussed methods to enhance media coverage of the MCZ campaign, over the next two years.



Link responds to the Green Paper on Biodiversity Offsetting

This month Link submitted its [response](#) to Defra's [Green Paper on biodiversity offsetting](#). The response, supported by 15 members, notes that the current development control system is failing to deal with the decline in our wildlife, habitats and landscape character. It points out that conservation benefits could be achieved through a more systematic approach to assessing the potential harm to biodiversity from development.

However, Link believes that there are significant risks associated with offsetting. These include the difficulties of recreating habitats, and the danger that a market-led approach would separate available offsets from the scientific assessment of both conservation need and the local, social value of biodiversity and landscape. Link's response also outlines a number of key principles which must be followed if offsetting is to contribute to biodiversity objectives.



Blueprint for Water coalition meeting with Dan Rogerson MP

On 19 November Link members met with Dan Rogerson MP, the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management. At the meeting, members highlighted concerns relating to abstraction reform, upstream competition in the Water Bill, and the watercourse maintenance pilots. Link also invited the Minister on a site visit in early 2014.

Meeting to discuss Blueprint for Water 2015

On 25 November the Blueprint met to discuss issues including: the new Blueprint for Water 2015; the review of water pricing for 2014 (PR14); a future consultation regarding the chemical pollutant cypermethrin; and the watercourse maintenance pilots.

Second reading of The Water Bill

The much anticipated Water Bill received its [2nd Reading on the 25 November](#). The Blueprint for Water Coalition was referenced by the Shadow Environment Secretary Marie Eagle MP and we were pleased to see that the Debate had a large focus on our concerns for the stewardship of the freshwater environment and the need to reform the water abstraction regime. Blueprint will be working with Members of all parties to amend the Bill over the coming weeks to address these concerns.

Meeting with David Amess MP

Link met with David Amess MP on 26 November to discuss the Water Bill, focusing on our proposed amendments around abstraction reform, upstream competition, a sustainable development duty for Ofwat and giving customers the right to choose universal metering in their area.



UK Cetaceans Workshop

Link ran a very productive UK Cetacean Workshop on 21 November which discussed the threats to UK cetaceans posed by sound disturbance, bycatch, climate change and pollution. Event speakers included Peter Evans from the Sea Watch Foundation and Sarah Gregerson from ClientEarth. The workshop also included a review of UK laws regarding cetaceans, taking into account the new recommendations from the Law Commission.

Greenland Teleconferences

Link attended two teleconferences with Nigel Gooding, Head of Marine Biodiversity at Defra, and other officials from Defra's Whales team (on 7 and 27 November) to discuss Greenland's unilateral fixing of catch quotas, without International Whaling Commission (IWC) approval.

Letter to the Peruvian Ambassador

On 26 November Link wrote to the Peruvian Ambassador in London to seek a meeting to discuss the killing of dolphins in Peru for shark bait.



Joint Liaison Group meeting

On 20 November members of the Wildlife Trade Working Group attended a Defra Joint Liaison Group meeting. The meeting focused on: preparations for the London Conference on illegal wildlife trade, taking place in February 2014; revisions to COTES regulations; updates to EU Wildlife trade regulations; and forthcoming events such as the IUCN African Elephants summit.

