

E-bulletin: April 2012

Welcome to Link's April e-bulletin. Please see below for April'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 [Louise](#).



NPPF update

Following the publication of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) in March, the Minister for Decentralisation and Cities, Greg Clark MP, wrote to Link's Director, to offer his thanks for Link's involvement in developing the final Framework.

Link has since responded to the Minister to acknowledge the significant improvements that have been made following the original NPPF draft. Link particularly welcomes: the revised definition of sustainable development; the recognition of the legal primacy of development plans; and the linkages made between the NPPF and the Natural Environment White Paper.

While the NPPF has been greatly improved, concern remains over how the Framework will be implemented. Link's letter outlines some key recommendations to Government, including the need for: clarity over how local plans will deliver sustainable development; clarity over how 'environmental value' will be calculated in relation to ancient woodland and previously developed sites; and ecological expertise within local authorities.

Targeting Nature's Recovery

This month Link published its report, [Targeting Nature's Recovery](#), which provides an analysis of progress against the 2010 targets for priority biodiversity species in England.

The report's findings suggest that the status of priority species should remain a key measure of nature's recovery. It urges the Government to implement the recommendations which Link outlined in its [critique of Biodiversity2020](#), published in December last year, as follows:

- The *Biodiversity 2020* implementation plan should include actions to secure or improve the status of *all* priority species.
- Natural England and other statutory agencies must proactively adapt their programmes, projects, advice and partnerships to integrate the needs of priority species into site and habitat conservation activity.
- A proper assessment should be undertaken into which priority species will be delivered through *all* landscape-scale conservation initiatives and Local Nature Partnerships.
- A clear programme of species-specific action must be outlined for those priority species most likely to go extinct by 2020 and/or unlikely to be adequately conserved through a habitat or landscape focused approach.
- Monitoring programmes, such as those on protected sites or in Nature Improvement Areas, should be modified or designed to measure progress on priority species.

Link will discuss the report with Natural England and Defra over the coming months.

Local Nature Partnerships

The Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, has opened applications for local areas to apply to become Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs). The Minister has subsequently written to Link to acknowledge our positive contribution during the NEWP consultation process:

“During our consultation on the Natural Environment White Paper, Wildlife and Countryside Link were instrumental in identifying the need for Local Nature Partnerships and the contribution WCL members have made to the development of the LNP concept with my officials since then has been enormously helpful”.

For more detail on LNPs click [here](#).

Link's 2011 Annual Report

Our independently examined Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2011 have been signed off by the Trustees and will shortly be available to view on the [Charity Commission](#) website. If you would like a copy in the meantime, please contact [Louise](#).

Joint Links

Joint Links' biennial seminar will be hosted by Northern Ireland Environment Link, at Strangford Lough, Belfast on 26 - 27 September 2012. More information will be available shortly.

New Link baby!

Congratulations to Link's Policy and Campaigns Coordinator, Kirsten Loveday, and her husband Matthew, who welcomed their new baby girl, Ivy Jennifer Sorrel Loveday, into the world on Wednesday 18 April. We look forward to meeting the new arrival soon!



Link Agriculture Working Group meeting

On 20 April, the Agriculture Working Group held a meeting to discuss the current workplan and ways of working. Discussions focused on moving forward with advocacy work on CAP reform and developing a position statement on uplands policy, following the recent announcement by Natural England to withdraw its long term vision document for the English Uplands, [Vital Uplands](#).

The group also discussed restructuring its work plan to distinguish between the proactive, reactive and monitoring elements of its work.

Working group members continue to input into several stakeholder forums. Most recently, Link members have been involved in the Defra Green Food Group geographical sub-group which has been developing case studies to feed into the group Steering Committee. Initial presentations on their findings were presented to the Steering Group this month.



England Biodiversity Strategy

Link will be seeking a meeting with Defra in June to discuss the England Biodiversity Strategy (EBS) delivery plan, which is expected to be published over the coming weeks.

UK Biodiversity Indicators Steering Group

On 24 April, Karen Haysom (BCT) and Richard Gregory (RSPB) attended Defra's UK Biodiversity Indicators Steering Group (UKBISG) meeting on behalf of Link. The main points of discussion included priority species indicators and the development of indicators to report on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Link Biodiversity Working Group meeting

The Biodiversity Working Group met on 25 April to discuss defining the outcomes for [Biodiversity2020 \(B2020\)](#); the B2020 delivery plan; the UKBISG meeting; and Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs). Link is currently looking to organise a workshop with NIA leads.



Review published

The [Report of the Habitats and Wild Birds Implementation Review](#) was published by Defra on 22 March. This reiterated the Government's commitment to 'ensuring that England's most vulnerable habitats and species are protected and that development is carried out in a sustainable manner'. It set up two new groups, the Major Infrastructure and Environment Unit and the Multi Stakeholder Infrastructure and Habitats Group. There will be new guidance on a number of topics, a website which brings all the relevant information together, standards for evidence required, a new Marine Evidence Group, improvements to surveillance and also support for ecological expertise.

Link's Habitats and Birds Task and Finish Group will be considering whether and where it can play a useful role in the implementation of these proposals.

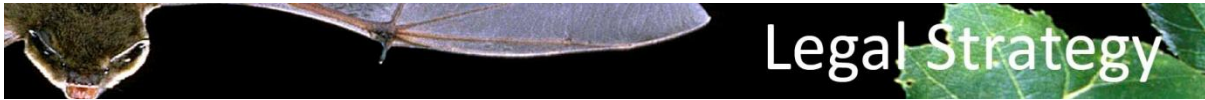


Meeting with Steph Hurst

On 15 May, Link will be meeting with Steph Hurst, Deputy Director of Planning and Environment at the Department for Communities and Local Government, to discuss the implementation of the NPPF, the future role of guidance, and the evidence base for planning.

Link Land Use Planning Working Group meeting

Link's Land Use Planning Working Group met on 24 April to discuss the publication and impacts of the NPPF; best practice guidance on planning; and building an evidence base around the impacts of the NPPF.



Wildlife and Countryside Act adjustment

This month Link submitted a response to the Defra pre-consultation on amendments to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended) Regulations (2004) relating to possession of wild bird eggs. The response had sign on from seven organisations and supports the RSPB's response showing strong support for maintaining the WCA amendment as it currently reads. Defra plans to undertake a full public consultation after acquiring stakeholder views.

Law Commission review

Last month Link attended the Law Commission's Wildlife Management Project Advisory Group meeting to discuss the Commission's [review of wildlife legislation](#). The Commission expects to publish its consultation document, leading to a three-month consultation period, at the end of July 2012. It will report to Defra – which commissioned the review – in February 2013 with a draft Bill being published in March 2014.



Ministerial meeting

Link's Marine Working Group met with the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, on 17 April following a pre-meet with Defra's Marine Biodiversity Team on 16 April. Link re-emphasised the importance of designating all 127 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and highlighted the recent controversy over scallop dredging in recommended MCZs in the North Sea.

Marine Strategy Framework Directive

On 20 April Link attended a [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) (MSFD) consultation event and followed this up with a meeting with Defra's Marine Biodiversity Team on 23 April. Joint Links will be submitting a response to the consultation by the 18 June deadline.

Red Tape Challenge

The Marine Working Group has submitted a letter in response to the Marine Environment Red Tape Challenge consultation, urging the Government to ensure legislation for Marine Conservation Zones is fully implemented. Many Link members and their supporters have also made comments on the consultation and these can be viewed [here](#).

Joint Links

On 11 April, the four Joint Links held a teleconference to discuss ways of sharing resources and information and taking a more coordinated approach to marine issues such as the [MSFD](#).

Natural Environment White Paper

EFRA evidence session

On 18 April, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee held an evidence session on the Natural Environment White Paper where the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, provided evidence. To see the full evidence session click [here](#).



Meeting with Ofwat

On 11 April, the Blueprint for Water coalition met with Noel Wheatley, Director of Environment at Ofwat, to discuss the Price Review 2014. Discussion also touched on the role of Customer Challenge Groups and Ofwat's Advisory Panel.

Blueprint for Water meeting

Following the Ofwat meeting, the Blueprint held an internal meeting to follow-up on the group's ways of working workshop in February. It was agreed at the meeting that the group would produce a scorecard rating Government progress against the [2010 Blueprint for Water](#) publication. Discussions also focussed on PR14, drought updates, abstraction reform and the Queen's Speech.

The Water Working Group will shortly be responding to the [Abstraction Compensation Consultation](#).

National Drought Management Group

Paul Knight, CEO of the Salmon & Trout Association, is the Blueprint representative on the National Drought Management Group (NDG). The group is chaired by Paul Leinster, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, and was established to co-ordinate an effective response to the current drought situation.

Blueprint for Water is also joint chair of the NDG's Environment sub-group with Tim Collins, Principal Specialist - Coasts & Water at Natural England. The Environment sub-group has presented its initial report on the environmental impacts of drought.



Meetings with the Minister and the IWC Commissioner

Link's Whales Working Group is due to meet the Minister, Richard Benyon MP, on the 23 May to discuss the upcoming IWC annual conference in Panama City. A week later, on the 30 May, Link will be meeting with the Defra Whales Team and the IWC Commissioner Nigel Gooding.



Link Wildlife Trade Working Group meeting

The Wildlife Trade Working Group met on 30 April primarily to prepare for the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) meeting on 16 May. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss updates on the [Environmental Audit Committee](#) inquiry into Wildlife Crime and the Control of Trade in Endangered Species review.

Environmental Audit Committee

On 18 April the [Environmental Audit Committee](#) held a public evidence session for its inquiry into Wildlife Crime. The session focussed on wildlife crime in Asia, taking evidence from Grace Ge Gabriel, Asia Regional Director, IFAW, and the effectiveness of specialist wildlife crime policing in the UK, with evidence from Richard Crompton, former Association of Chief Police Officers Wildlife Crime Lead.



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