

Q4 Report October - December 2009

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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...*

Friends,

Link ended the year in style with our AGM and a party to mark the Marine and Coastal Access Act becoming law.

This year Link's AGM marked both the end of our business year and the end of our planning for the next three years. It was good to see so many of you at the Garden Court Chambers on 8 December where members approved a new strategy to take us through to the end of 2012.

Developing a three year strategy of this kind is a first for Link. Work on the Strategy has involved members at every stage and has been going on for almost a year. It is pleasing that Link's entire membership fed their ideas, thoughts and ambitions into the process.

Link enters 2010 with the key aim to get the natural environment high on the political agenda alongside climate over the next three years. Look out for the Direction Statement summarising the strategy, aims and objectives. This will be published on our website soon.

Alongside our formal AGM business the Chairs and Vice Chairs of each of our Working Groups presented on their 2009 work and new aims to put the new Link strategy into effect. Lively debate was then sparked by three excellent presentations in our Environmental Law session, which got us all thinking about how to enforce environmental legislation for environmental protection.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act became law on 12 November. Link has campaigned for a decade for greater protection for our seas and has been involved in the Act throughout its Parliamentary stages. On 2 December BBC presenter Kate Humble and Environment Secretary Hilary Benn MP joined Link's celebrations at the London Aquarium. It was great to see and thank so many people who had played their part and we were thrilled to have Kate and Hilary with us to add their thanks and inspire us all about how to make the Act work.

Best wishes for 2010,

Paul de Zylva
Chair

Task Forces

Marine



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Chair: Joan Edwards, TWT
Vice Chair: Sharon Thompson, RSPB
Secretary: Joanna Butler

“To campaign for comprehensive legislation to achieve better protection for marine wildlife and effective management of our seas”

Link was delighted that a decade of campaigning finally came to fruition this quarter, as on 12 November the Marine and Coastal Access Act reached the statute books. Link has been involved from the beginning of its development, positively influencing the legislation right from the initial stages through to the passage of the Bill through Parliament. As a result, we now have a very good Act on the statute books. The next big challenge is to ensure that the new measures are brought swiftly and effectively into force. Link will therefore now be turning its focus to the implementation of the Act.

To celebrate the Act and to highlight the importance of its implementation, Link held a very successful event at the London Aquarium on 2 December. The event, which was attended by a range of key stakeholders, was also used to launch Link's '*Vision for the Future of our Seas*'. We were delighted that Kate Humble, BBC presenter of the *Springwatch* and *Autumnwatch* series, and Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, attended and said a few words.

Marine Task Force (MTF) members attended a number of workshops and events during this quarter, including a Defra workshop on the UK Marine Science Strategy and a Marine Strategy Framework Directive conference. A presentation on the protection of marine habitats and wildlife was also given on behalf of Link at the Environmental Law Foundation's 'Access to Justice for Nature' event.

We are pleased to announce that Joan Edwards (TWT) and Sharon Thompson (RSPB) have been re-elected as Chair and Vice Chair of the group for 2010. In addition, to reflect its move away from a group that campaigns for marine legislation into a group works to ensure its full implementation, the MTF has now been renamed the Marine Legislation Working Group for 2010.

Working Groups

Biodiversity



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Chair: Nicola Hutchinson, Plantlife
Vice Chair: Nigel Bourn, Butterfly Conservation
Secretary: Kirsten Knap

“To work together with the UK Government to halt and reverse the rapid rate of biodiversity loss and continue to influence the UK BAP process at the highest level”

This quarter Link and a number of Link members attended the UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference, entitled *the Value of Biodiversity*. The conference included presentations on valuing biodiversity, a summary of Country Updates and an excellent talk by Pavan Sukdev who updated attendees on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study.

In October Link attended the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee meeting, during which discussions were held on plans for reporting on priority species and habitats.

In November Link met with Natural England to discuss the workings of the England Biodiversity Strategy (EBS) framework, in particular, the role of Lead Partners, measuring success and developing targets.

Other external meetings attended by Link this quarter included two England Biodiversity Group (EBG) meetings and the Lowland Farmland, Upland and Woodland Biodiversity Integration Group (BIG) meetings. The Biodiversity Working Group also held two internal meetings, where items discussed included conservation credits, the EBS Framework and their 2010 work programme.

We are pleased to announce that at Link's AGM on 8 December Nicola Hutchinson (PL) and Nigel Bourn (BC) were elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the Biodiversity Working Group for 2010.

Land use planning

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*Chair: Simon Marsh, RSPB
Vice Chair: Paul Miner, CPRE
Secretary: Fiona Llewellyn*

“To promote a democratic and transparent planning system which considers environmental limits and provides a key mechanism to deliver sustainable development whilst enabling adaptation to climate change”

This quarter the Land Use Planning Working Group (LUPWG) published a [briefing paper](#) on National Policy Statements (NPSs) and the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC). The briefing outlines our views that NPSs must deliver sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation, examination procedures of major infrastructure applications must be accessible and that the IPC as an unelected and unaccountable body, should only make recommendations to Ministers, not final decisions.

In October Link [responded](#) to the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) consultation on the Policy Statement on Regional Strategies and Guidance on the establishment of Leaders' Boards. Prior to the consultation, Link met with Defra and CLG to discuss the National Core Sustainability Framework and work on environmental limits, the contents of regional strategies and the process by which regional strategies will be developed. Link also submitted a [response](#) to CLG's consultation on a new Planning Policy on Development and Coastal Change.

In November Link wrote to the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon John Denham MP, outlining Link's views on the examination procedures for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and reiterating our concerns with the level of public scrutiny allowed for within the planning reforms. A copy of the letter was also sent to Sir Michael Pitt, Chair of the IPC.

We are pleased to announce that at Link's AGM on 8 December Simon Marsh (RSPB) and Paul Miner (CPRE) were elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the Land Use Planning Working Group for 2010.

Water

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*Chair: Robert Cunningham, RSPB
Vice Chair: Tom Le Quesne, WWF-UK
Secretary: Kirsten Knap*

“To raise awareness of the importance of the public value of water and continue to advocate the 10 steps to sustainable water as set out in the Blueprint for Water”

Throughout the quarter the Blueprint for Water coalition continued lobbying to influence the draft River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), which the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, submitted to the European Commission in December, in line with the Water Framework Directive deadlines.

In November Ofwat published their final determinations on price limits for 2010 to 2015 as part of the Periodic Review 2009 (PR09). The Blueprint had [responded](#) to Ofwat's draft determinations in October, broadly welcoming them, but raising concerns with the long-term implications of the determinations not being strong enough. Following the final publication, the Blueprint coalition submitted a [press release](#) to the media, which again broadly welcomed the final determinations, but raised concerns that the investment plans would not be sufficient to maintain infrastructure and tackle leakage or to cope with the significant changes in water scarcity and climate change.

On 18 November, during the Queen's speech, it was stated that “*Legislation will be introduced to protect communities from flooding and to improve the management of water supplies*”, and on 19 November the Floods and Water Management Bill was introduced into Parliament.

Link continues to be represented on the Pitt Natural Processes Working Group and has attended two Pitt Working Group meetings this quarter. Link was also invited to sit on the the Water Protection Zone Stakeholder Group and the Chair of the Water group has attended two meetings this quarter in October and December.

We are pleased to announce that at Link's AGM on 8 December Robert Cunningham (RSPB) and Carrie Hume (WWT) were elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the Water Working Group for 2010.

Working Groups



Farming

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Chair: Ian Woodhurst, CPRE
Vice Chair: Gareth Morgan, RSPB
Secretary: Kirsten Knap

“To lobby for policies which support and deliver a sustainable, high quality, multi-functional environment in rural areas through reforming the CAP, influencing the development and revision of AES, and implementing the RDPE”

This quarter saw the launch of the [Campaign for the Farmed Environment](#) (CFE), the industry-led voluntary approach for the replacement of set-aside, which is being led by the Country Land & Business Association and the National Farmers Union. In October the Chair of Link's Farming and Rural Development Group attended the CFE's Evidence and Monitoring subgroup meeting, which Link was invited to sit on in September.

In November Link wrote to George Lyon, the Liberal Democrat MEP for Scotland, who has been appointed as rapporteur by the European Agriculture Committee to draft a report setting out the Committee's priorities for the upcoming Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform. Our letter served to introduce Mr Lyon to Link and to our vision for a European Sustainable Land Management Policy as set out in [Beyond the Pillars](#).

During the quarter Link attended a number of external meetings, including two Agri-environment Stakeholder Group meetings in October and December, the Pesticides Forum meeting, and the Rural Development Programme for England's (RDPE) Programme Monitoring Committee meeting in November. The Farming Group also held one internal meeting in October to discuss the future of the group and its workplan priorities for the next three years.

In line with Link's new Operational Strategy, the Farming and Rural Development Working Group, has been renamed the Agriculture Working Group. We are pleased to announce that at Link's AGM on 8 December Gareth Morgan (RSPB) and Ian Woodhurst (CPRE) were elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the Agriculture Working Group for 2010.



Wildlife and trade

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Chair: Rob Atkinson, RSPCA
Vice Chair: Cathy Williamson, WDCS
Secretary: Jodie Bettis

“Working towards improved protection of wild fauna and flora threatened by trade and focused primarily on CITES”

The Wildlife and Trade Working Group met in October to discuss the forthcoming Conference of the Parties ([CoP15](#)), which will be held in Dohar, Qatar, from 13 to 25 March 2010. The group shared details on proposals of interest to Link that are being put forward by the UK and other EU countries, such as those on bluefin tuna, porbeagle and dogfish sharks.

Link members attended two Defra Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) meetings this quarter, in October and December. During October's meeting, Defra stressed its desire to be transparent and inclusive with NGOs in the run up to and during the CoP process. Defra also welcomed any input to upcoming EU meetings related to CITES and will call a number of JLG meetings in the run up to CoP15. At December's meeting, trade in species that are on Annex A (of the EC Wildlife Trade Regulations) because of the EU Habitats Directive but which are not on CITES Appendix I were discussed, and Defra reported that European eel management plans are in the pipeline.

We are pleased to announce that at Link's AGM on 8 December Rob Atkinson (RSPCA) and Cathy Williamson (WDCS) were elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the Wildlife Trade Working Group for 2010.

Working Groups

Whales

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*Chair: Jenny Lonsdale, EIA
Vice Chair: Claire Bass, WSPA
Secretary: Jodie Bettis*

“To discuss cetacean issues, exchange information, coordinate strategies for the International Whaling Commission (IWC), develop briefings for the UK Government and liaise with Defra on matters relating to cetaceans”

At the beginning of the quarter the UK Government, along with 25 other nations, sent a diplomatic protest (“demarche”) to Iceland regarding their escalation of commercial whaling. The demarche expressed disappointment in the Icelandic Government’s decision to authorise the hunting of fin and minke whales over the next five years and called upon Iceland to respect the IWC’s global moratorium and end its commercial whaling. Following the demarche, Link wrote to the UK Ambassador to Iceland, thanking him and his colleagues for the sterling efforts getting the demarche delivered.

This quarter also saw the Environment Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies MP write to the Japanese Ambassador to the UK, to address the UK’s concerns with continued whaling in Japan and to raise the issue of the hunting of small cetaceans in Japanese waters. Link also wrote to the Minister asking for a similar letter of protest to be sent to Norway regarding its increase in self-allocation of minke whales.

At the end of October it was announced that the IWC’s Small Working Group (SWG) meeting to discuss the future of the IWC and the intersessional meeting to discuss Greenland’s request for a humpback quota have both been delayed until March 2010.

The Whales Working Group held a meeting in November to discuss the future of the group in light of Link’s Strategy for 2010 to 2012 and the changing focus of members of this group. It was agreed that the group will continue to work on stopping all forms of commercial whaling including maintaining the global moratorium and also to broaden the group’s mandate to include work to improve the protection of cetaceans in UK waters.

Link News

Link Secretariat

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Following approval by the membership, Link’s new Operational Strategy has now been published and is set to put our 2010-2012 work programme on course to help get the natural environment as highly placed on the agenda as climate over the next three years. A Direction Statement, summarising Link’s aims and objectives for the next five years will be circulated in the New Year and will be available to view on our website in 2010.

There was an excellent turn-out to Link’s Annual General Meeting, which was held at Garden Court Chambers in London on 8 December. The AGM was prefaced by presentations from Link’s Working Groups’ Chairs and Vice Chairs, covering work carried out in 2009 and our aims for 2010 onwards. Following the formal business of the AGM, members enjoyed an Environmental Law for Environmental Protection session; with excellent presentations from James Thornton, CEO of ClientEarth; Richard Harvey, Barrister at Garden Court Chambers; and Matt Shardlow, CEO of Buglife. Many interesting points were raised during this session and the resulting discussion continued for some time over wine and mince pies.

Link is pleased to announce that following elections at the AGM - we have a new Treasurer; David Lind (RSPCA). Link’s previous Treasurer, Helga Edwards (Woodland Trust) stepped down in December, after 3 years in the role. We would like to extend a huge thank you to Helga for all of her hard work and good guidance during her time as Treasurer.



Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)

The NI Assembly's Environment Committee's report into climate change came out during November and provides a good framework for action; it was accepted by the Assembly but that does not guarantee full commitment. A Wave event by Stop Climate Chaos NI took much time and effort to organize, and did obtain excellent media coverage, though was only attended by some 600 people - but that's good for an open air event in Belfast! NIEL Policy Officer, Seamus Gallagher left NIEL for DECC, starting in the New Year. NIEL prepared their draft policy paper, *The Way Ahead 2010*, for initial consultation with members, before it is launched as their main work framework for the next year.

Funding has reached crisis levels due to drastic governmental cuts, leading to a major work area for NIEL to assist NGOs to deal with this over the coming years. The Environmental Education Forum funding was stopped with about 10 days notice, a very traumatic and sad result; the EEF will continue to do what it can with no staff and no funding (essentially back to being a NIEL Task Force). A well attended and very interesting members meeting in December looked at the perils of communicating complicated and scientific messages (such as climate change) to the public and politicians. A draft Sustainable Development Strategy was released to widespread despair and NIEL are preparing detailed comments on how it needs to be revised if it is to provide any sort of framework for action. Work continues on many consultation documents, including transport, energy and waste.

Wales Environment Link (WEL)

WEL's Climate Change Working Group responded to WAG's 'Climate Change Strategy: Programme of Action' consultation in October and is continuing to input comments via the Climate Change Commission. The group have called for AMs to support the commitment to reduce Wales' carbon emissions by at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2020.

The Energy & Transport Working Group responded to the consultation on the National Transport Plan for Wales and also provided written evidence for the Enterprise and Learning Committee's Inquiry into Future Rail Infrastructure in Wales.

The Land Use Working Group continues to monitor and contribute to development of the Glastir agri-environment scheme while the Biodiversity Working Group has been focusing on the failure to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 and, in conjunction with volunteers from the Advocacy Working Group, has created a Biodiversity Campaign Task & Finish Group, which will meet initially in January 2010.

The Marine Working Group (MWG) organised a successful reception in November to celebrate the Marine and Coastal Access Act passing into law. The reception was attended by Ministers, Welsh Assembly Government members, National Assembly for Wales officials, AMs and stakeholders. Speeches were given by the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing, Jane Davidson; Dr Iwan Ball (MWG Chair) and Professor Lynda Warren, Chair of the Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership. This Group also responded to WAG's Marine Protected Areas Strategy consultation in December.

During November WEL held an 'Environment Focus' period and sent letters to Assembly Members to inform them of WEL member events. As part of the initiative WEL held environmental policy 'drop-in' sessions for AMs and officials, which involved many of the policy specialists from WEL's membership and were attended by 22 AMs, officials and researchers from the Assembly.

Scottish Environment Link (SEL)

The Scottish Marine Bill finished Stage 2 of its passage through the Scottish Parliament in December. The Marine Task Force commissioned [Recovering Scotland's Marine Environment](#), a report making the case for ecosystem recovery which was used effectively in advocacy around the Bill. The Committee voted for a duty to establish a network of marine protected areas, a key ask of SEL's marine campaign.

The Planning Task Force was fairly pleased with ScotGov's revised draft proposals for a consolidated Scottish Planning Policy which addressed some of SEL's major concerns about the initial draft.

SEL launched its proposals in December for a [Sustainable Land Use Strategy](#), which Government is required to produce under Scotland's climate legislation by 2011. This has generated plenty of interest from other sectors.

The Members' Congress on *The Environment & Economics* followed by the network forward planning meeting was held in November with a good turnout of members and guests despite floods. The mix of presentations, smaller workshops and plenary debate worked well this year.

SEL's new [website](#) went live in November after several months of work. All SEL outputs are available there, including the [Winter newsletter](#), which gives more information about the highlights of the last quarter.