

## Q1 Report January - March 2010

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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,*

Welcome to Link's first quarterly report of 2010. It is a special year as we celebrate 30 years of Link, mark the UN International Year of Biodiversity and start working to Link's new three year strategy.

This quarter Jodie and her team have been working with members to put the strategy into action. [Link's Direction Statement](#) summarises the plan approved by members at our December AGM - do familiarise yourself with this and let us know how you want to be involved.

It has also been a busy quarter as we anticipate the post-election activity. Whatever the make-up of the next government, the issues which Link and its members represent are central to good government and making this known is part of our strategy.

Meanwhile the quarter has seen both set-backs and victories for the natural environment. We were delighted that the EU Environment Council has decided to go for the most ambitious option in setting the European post-2010 biodiversity target and we hope that the global target will reflect this ambition when it is set at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity 10th Conference of the Parties (CoP10) in October. In contrast, decisions at the CITES 15th conference of the parties to reject bans on trade in a number of species, including bluefin tuna were hardly the best way to kick off UN International Year of Biodiversity.

But there is still an important occasion to celebrate: Link will mark its 30 anniversary and advocate our goals in the post-election arena with a summer Parliamentary reception. Alongside this event, we will also launch a refresh of Link's most popular publication, [Making the Link](#), highlighting our unique work including the many triumphs which have helped to secure progress in conservation, welfare and environmental thinking over three decades. We do hope to see many of you there and will be sending out invitations shortly.

Best wishes,



Paul de Zylva  
Chair

### Marine



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

*“Works to ensure better protection of marine wildlife and effective management of our seas by seeking the full implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act”*

In January Link members attended a Defra workshop to discuss the development of the Marine Policy Statement (MPS). Following the workshop, Link wrote to Alison Reeves, Head of Marine Stewardship at Defra, highlighting our concerns with the National Policy Statements (NPSs), which we do not want to be seen repeated in the MPS development process.

Link met with Defra in February to raise our concerns that the Government may be weakening its stance on the MPS and to discuss the Ministerial Statement on the creation of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The Ministerial Statement was laid before Parliament in March. Link sent [briefings](#) to the Environment Minister both before and after the publication of the statement, setting out our expectations and then outlining aspects that Link welcomed, along with points for concern.

Link has responded to a number of consultations this quarter, including the Defra consultation on marine plan areas within the English Inshore and English Offshore marine regions. Link submitted a Joint response with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales Environment Links, to the consultation on the UK's draft transposing Regulations for the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Link also responded to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office consultation on whether to establish a MPA in the British Indian Ocean Territory, Chagos. Link strongly supported the option to declare a full no-take marine reserve and was pleased when the Foreign Secretary announced on 1 April that a MPA would be created in the British Indian Ocean Territory and that it would include a no-take zone where commercial fishing would be banned. Finally, Link is currently working on a response to [JNCC and Natural England's consultation on the draft ecological network guidance](#), which will be submitted by the deadline of 9 April. All of Link's responses are available on our [website](#).

### Biodiversity



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

*“Works to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by working to improve the UK BAP process and seeks to ensure that the England Biodiversity Strategy is fully implemented”*

Link's Biodiversity Working Group began the year by responding to the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) new strategic plan. The [response](#) was sent to the Environment Minister, along with a letter reiterating the message that we want a strong and ambitious post 2010 target.

In February Link's penultimate [annual progress assessment](#) of the Government's commitment to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 was published. The report had the support of 22 member organisations and was sent to a wide range of stakeholders. This year the report also included recommendations to Government, measured against the original performance indicators as devised in [2006](#). Link discussed the assessment results at a liaison meeting with Defra and Natural England, during which Defra agreed to investigate a number of the challenges we presented.

Link was pleased that on 15 March the European Environment Council agreed upon the most ambitious option for the [European post-2010 biodiversity target](#). The [European Council](#) (Heads of Member States and the President of the Commission) met at the end of March and accepted the target to halt and restore biodiversity by 2010 as part of the European 2020 strategy for jobs and growth. These decisions will be taken forward to the CBD 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (CoP10) in October.

Link attended a number of external meetings this quarter, including Natural England's conference to launch their new publication, [Lost Life: England's lost and threatened species](#), the Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group meeting and the Wetland Biodiversity Integration Group meeting. Link also attended the Local & Regional Strategy Implementation Group meeting where Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Areas (IBDAs) were discussed as a mechanism to deliver the England Biodiversity Strategy.

### Land use planning

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

*“Works to conserve the natural and historic environment by working to improve the national planning system for the benefit of biodiversity and landscape”*

In January with the support of 14 member organisations, Link responded to the draft Energy and Ports NPSs. The [response](#) raised Link’s concerns with the lack of strategic vision within the NPSs and the inadequacy of both the appraisal of sustainability and the public consultation and scrutiny process.

At the end of January Sir Michael Pitt, Chair of the [Infrastructure Planning Commission](#) (IPC), came to Link to meet the Land Use Planning Working Group (LUPWG). Sir Michael gave a useful update on the IPC and answered our numerous questions. Link has since written to Sir Michael, thanking him for the meeting and reiterating Link’s concerns that the current draft NPSs are not fit for purpose.

In February the Conservative Party launched their planning green paper; [Open Source Planning](#). In response to the paper, Link wrote to the Shadow Local Government and Planning Minister, Bob Neill MP, outlining our recommendations and highlighting a number of concerns we have with the paper.

This quarter Link began drafting a response to the long-awaited new planning policy statement (PPS) for the natural environment, entitled: [Planning for a natural and healthy environment](#), which was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in March. The response will be submitted to CLG by the deadline of 1 June. Link is also intending to submit a response to the new PPS on climate change, [Planning for a Low Carbon Future in a Changing Climate](#), which has also been published for consultation.

### Water

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Chair: *Robert Cunningham, RSPB*  
Vice Chair: *Carrie Hume, WWT*  
Secretary: *Kirsten Knap*

*“Works to restore the ecology of the UK’s rivers, lakes and wetlands by working to ensure the delivery of the objectives of the Water Framework Directive”*

This quarter saw the [Flood and Water Management Bill](#) move from the House of Commons into the House of Lords. Defra came to Link’s offices in February to brief us on the Bill and its progress through Parliament. During this meeting several key sections of the Bill were discussed including Clauses 38 and 39, which would empower authorities to do work for environmental reasons where there is no flood risk benefit. Due to the timing of the general election, the Bill is going through “wash-up” before the House rises on 12 April.

In February the Environment Agency (EA) invited views from the Blueprint for Water coalition on their proposals to designate the Lower Lee river environment as a Water Protection Zone (WPZ). Link has now [responded](#) to the EA, outlining our concerns with the proposals. Whilst Link does remain supportive of the use of WPZs, we question whether the Lower Lee region is the right place to designate one of the seven pilot WPZ projects.

In February the Water Working Group met to discuss River Basin Management Plans, the Flood and Water Management Bill, plans for a Blueprint for Water coalition conference later this year and the group’s Parliamentary focus in 2010. A Link representative attended the final meetings of the Pitt Natural Processes Working Group in March. The Pitt Natural Processes draft report has now been circulated for comment and the final report will be published later this year.





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### Agriculture

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

***“Works to support and deliver a sustainable high quality, multi-functional rural environment through influencing and monitoring policy on rural development, agri-environment, bioenergy, and animal welfare standards”***

In February Link and Scottish Environment Link (SEL) met with the European Agriculture Committee’s “rapporteur”, George Lyon MEP to discuss the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Link was disappointed with the working document Mr Lyon produced on the future of the CAP as it did not contain any measures for the CAP to evolve into a public goods delivery mechanism. Link and SEL wrote to Mr Lyon expressing these concerns and copied the letter to all other UK MEPs on the Agriculture Committee.

The European Environment Committee took the decision not to comment on Mr Lyon’s full [draft report](#), which was published at the end of March. Upon learning this, Link and SEL wrote joint letters of concern to the Chair of the Environment Committee and all UK MEPs on the Committee, urging them to reconsider their decision.

In March the Chair of Link’s Agriculture Group wrote to the European Commissioner for the Environment, [Janez Potočnik](#), congratulating him on his new role and welcoming his recent [speech](#), in which he stated that the CAP should deliver for environmental public goods. A similar letter was sent to the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, [Dacian Cioloș](#).

This quarter Link published a [position statement on soils](#), which was submitted as a response to Natural England’s [draft strategy on soils](#). Link has also attended a number of external meetings, including the second Evidence and Monitoring Sub-group meeting of the [Campaign for the Farmed Environment](#), the Rural Affairs Group meeting, and the Rural Development Programme for England Programme Monitoring Committee meeting. In March Link attended a stakeholder meeting on EU pesticides legislation, hosted by Defra and work has since begun on a response to Defra’s [consultation on implementing European pesticides legislation](#).



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### Wildlife trade

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

***“Works to improve the conservation of wild flora and fauna threatened by international trade by seeking to ensure the proper implementation of CITES”***

The 15th Conference of the Parties ([CoP15](#)) to CITES has been the focus for the Wildlife Trade Working Group this quarter. In the run-up to CoP15, which took place in Doha, Qatar from 13 to 25 March, Link continued to engage with Defra on trade issues through the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) meetings of conservationists and traders.

Disappointingly there were few successes to be had for conservationists at CoP15. The proposal to ban trade in bluefin tuna was rejected, as were the proposals to ban trade in polar bear products and four species of shark (hammerhead, porbeagle, oceanic white-tip and spiny dogfish). Voting did go in favour of amphibians and reptiles and trade restrictions were placed on a number of species from Central America and Iran. The one-off elephant ivory stockpile sales, proposed by Zambia and Tanzania were rejected amid concerns that a weakening of the trade ban would lead to further poaching.

Link had hoped that in 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, more decisions would have been made in favour of protecting wildlife, but unfortunately the disappointments outnumbered the victories.

# Whales

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*Acting Chair: Mark Simmonds, WDCS  
Secretary: Jodie Bettis*

*“Works to ensure better protection of cetaceans including through the reform of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) into a conservation body”*

A number of Link members attended the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Small Working Group meeting on the future of the IWC on 3-5 March in Florida. The *‘Chair’s Report to the Small Working Group on the Future of the IWC’*, which formed the basis of the discussions at the meeting, raised many concerns for NGOs as it legitimises whaling in the Southern Ocean and weakens the scientific basis to whaling proposals. An Intersessional Meeting was also held to decide upon Greenland’s humpback whale quota. However, a decision could not be made on this issue as less than half of the IWC’s members were present and quorate was not reached. A decision has therefore been delayed until the annual IWC62 meeting in June.

In advance of the meetings in Florida, Link and other NGOs met with Richard Cowan, the then UK Commissioner to the IWC, to discuss the UK’s position, preparations for IWC62 and ongoing whaling activities in Iceland, Norway and Japan.

Following the meetings, Link sent a letter to the Environment Minister, setting out a number of concerns we have with the future of the IWC and aboriginal subsistence issues. We have since received a response from the Minister, assuring us that “the UK will continue to maintain a strong position on the protection of whales and will pay careful attention to any elements that might undermine or weaken the moratorium on commercial whaling.”

In March Richard Cowan retired from his post as Head of Marine and Freshwater Biodiversity at Defra and UK Commissioner to the IWC. Link understands that Nigel Gooding has been appointed as his replacement and will be attending the IWC62 meeting in June as the UK’s IWC Commissioner. Link is arranging to meet with Mr Gooding in the near future.

## Link News

# Link Secretariat

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We are thrilled to announce that Link has received funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust to extend our Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator role for another three years. The role began as a three year project back in 2007 and was due to finish at the end of April 2010. The continuation of the project for another three years is great news for our marine work. Link has also signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Natural England, securing vital core funding for the next three years.

We were delighted to welcome Lizzie Gardner as a new Link volunteer in February. Lizzie joins Pui San Looi, who has been volunteering for Link since last August. Lizzie and Pui San have been working hard on Link’s e-bulletins, our new library database and countless other tasks around the office, and continue to be a vital asset to the Link team.

Finally we would like to congratulate Joanna, our Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator, on her wedding and let you all know that Jo’s new name is Joanna Fisher. Congratulations Jo and Liam - we wish you every happiness!



## Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)

Sustainable development, climate change and planning have dominated NIEL's agenda over the last few months. The funding crisis following on from the recession has really hit the NI Civil Service hard and this in turn has had serious impacts on the ENGO sector. NIEL is managing a consultancy project to look at thematically and geographically 'mapping' the sector. This project will provide a first step in promoting the value of ENGOs and will help develop a strategic government-based approach with the aim of encouraging funding to ensure the critical role of the sector is maintained. Effectively raising the profile of ENGOs is vital if their political influence is to be upheld at a time when government funding continues to tighten.

In February NIEL produced their policy paper, *The Way Ahead 2010*, which is stimulating a round of meetings with Departments and Agencies promoting the document's key principles. NIEL held an informative and well attended seminar with Northern Ireland Environment Agency in March. The seminar entitled 'right versus right' examined issues relating to conflicting environmental pressures on opposing sides.

NIEL has been heavily involved in the National Ecosystem Assessment and developing a risk register for the organisation. Reports on the last five years of NIEL work are nearing completion and will form the basis of future funding bids. A revised Strategic Plan is also under development. NIEL is fortunate to have had assistance from four students and a temporary worker for the first few months of 2010 - the recent workload certainly required this much appreciated extra help!

## Wales Environment Link (WEL)

WEL's Climate Change Working Group continues to engage in development of the Climate Change Strategy: Programme of Action, via the Wales Climate Change Commission and has begun to meet with Assembly Members to discuss priorities for action on climate change, in advance of the Welsh election in 2011.

The Land Use Working Group is monitoring and contributing to development of the Glastir agri-environment scheme, and gave written and oral evidence to the Rural Development Sub-Committee's Glastir Inquiry in February. The group will also be responding to the Committee's upcoming inquiry into CAP reform.

The Biodiversity Working Group will be meeting with Forestry Commission Wales in April to discuss their Woodland Biodiversity Policy. The group is also helping to establish the first Cross Party Group for Biodiversity within the Assembly, which has support from the four main political parties. A Biodiversity Campaign Task & Finish Group is currently working on priority areas to be incorporated into a biodiversity campaign to influence post-2010 biodiversity targets and actions.

The Marine Working Group responded to the WAG consultation on Future Sea Fisheries in February and will be feeding into a Joint Links response to the Marine Policy Statement pre-consultation document. WEL is currently celebrating the recent news that we are to receive all the marine funding applied for from the charitable trusts so that we can maintain dedicated Marine Officer posts in Wales until 2013.

Members have been working on a Manifesto for the 2011 Assembly election. In the coming months WEL will be organising opportunities to discuss ideas with party manifesto writers, Assembly Members, and environmental statutory bodies in Wales.

## Scottish Environment Link (SEL)

SEL's report *Working for Sustainable Development through Single Outcome Agreements* was published in February, outlining a structural approach on how SEL can engage with local government to ensure that the SOA process is contributing to a more sustainable future for Scotland. The sixth Scottish Environment Week was hosted by SEL at the Scottish Parliament in February. This year's theme was "Scotland's Environment: It's Great!". The week's six events were well attended by MSPs.

On 10 March Scotland's Marine Bill received Royal Assent. The Bill contains most of the major amendments pushed for by SEL's Marine Taskforce and marks the end of ten years of successful advocacy by SEL members. SEL's Marine Taskforce is now looking to ensure that the Marine Bill is fully implemented. Foreseeing possible conflict, in particular between renewables and biodiversity, the Taskforce has commissioned a report on avoiding conflict in the marine environment. Confirmation has been received from the Charitable Trusts that they will continue to fund SEL's marine work and SEL are now recruiting an assistant Marine Policy Advocacy Officer.

SEL's Sustainable Land Use Strategy Taskforce is pressing very hard for a meaningful Sustainable Land Use Strategy from the Scottish Government. SEL is looking for it to be as broad as possible in scope and foresees that the Strategy should sit at the same legislative level as the current national planning framework. The Deer/WNE Taskforce is in serious discussions with the Scottish Government about the content of the upcoming Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, which will include game law licensing, deer management and other issues of interest to members. SEL's Agriculture Taskforce is currently revisiting its CAP Health Check and will publish a review later this spring.