

Q2 Report April - June 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,

Things are heating up so before you take a deserved break here's a recap of a busy quarter in which Link has entered a new and heightened phase of working.

The new Coalition Government has been the early test for Link working to our new 2010+ strategy. Excellent cooperation at speed has been the hallmark of Link's work for and with members almost from day one of the coalition.

Soon after election day our Link Policy Directors discussed initial ideas on how to navigate the new look Government. This laid the ground for Link to keep members informed of daily political events. At the end of the quarter, Link's Management Committee used its planned away day, kindly hosted by Plantlife at its Salisbury HQ, to decide how Link can raise its impact in the new political arena.

We anticipate no let-up of workload as summer turns to autumn especially with our ongoing our collective work on spending decisions and ideas for better ways of delivering on Link's agenda. And of course, we are organising to influence the Natural Environment White Paper, launched on 26 July.

Work continues apace in each of our seven working groups as we get to grips with changes to the agenda and what this means for each of our policy areas. We have written to all new Ministers at Defra and at the Department for Communities and Local Government, introducing Link and requesting further engagement with the Departments during this busy time.

In the midst of all these changes, Link retained focus on the 62nd Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission, where on the table for consideration was the [Proposal on the Future of the IWC](#), which Link had significant concerns with. If accepted, the proposal would have legitimised commercial whaling for the first time in more than 25 years and could have set precedents for the resurrection of large-scale commercial whaling industries worldwide. The Commission was unable to reach consensus on the Proposal at the Annual Meeting and agreed to postpone work on the topic until its 2011 meeting; leaving Link with breathing space but more campaigning to do on this front in the mean time.

As you will see throughout this report, it's been a busy quarter for all of our working groups. Activities have included a workshop on the future of land use planning in England, the production of a [Marine Planning Principles](#) leaflet and a [briefing on mobile marine species](#), as well as input to the National Ecosystem Assessment and continued lobbying to influence the future of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Thanks for your help in all this and best wishes,

Paul de Zylva
Chair



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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”

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) continues to be the main focus for Link's Agriculture Working Group this quarter. In April Link and the Joint Links in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, responded to the [George Lyon draft report](#) on the future of the CAP after 2013. We were disappointed that the draft did not take into account previous concerns we had raised, particularly for the CAP to evolve into a European Sustainable Land Management Policy. MEPs have since tabled their amendments to the report and these have now been voted on by the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament. Outcomes from the amendments were very disappointing and those tabled by NGOs were either rejected or absorbed into broader 'compromise amendments' where key messages were lost.

In June Link [responded](#) to the [public debate](#) on the future of the CAP after 2013, reiterating the importance of public money for public goods. The European Commission has now organised a [conference](#) to analyse the responses of the CAP reform public debate. Link will be attending the conference, which takes place on 19-20 July 2010 in Brussels.

This quarter Link has also been undertaking work on pesticides and in May, with the support of 12 member organisations, we submitted a [response](#) to Defra's [consultation on implementing European pesticides legislation](#). Link also attended the Pesticides Forum meeting, which took place in June, where an update on the Sustainable Use Directive was given.



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Biodiversity

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”

The England Biodiversity Strategy was reviewed at the England Biodiversity Group meeting in April. Link highlighted key issues that the strategy should contain, including landscape-scale conservation delivery that has biodiversity at its heart and clearly demonstrates wildlife outcomes, and the efficacy of the Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Areas (IBDAs) and other large-scale projects.

It was announced in May that the target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 had 'officially' been missed. Although the failure to reach the target had long been known, it was ironic that the announcement came days before the UN's International Biodiversity Day; a celebration of biodiversity around the world.

However, the good news is that the EU has now agreed on an ambitious headline target of, *halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss*. The global biodiversity target will be adopted at the Convention on Biological Diversity 10th Conference of the Parties (CoP10) in October in Nagoya, Japan.

The [2008 UK Biodiversity Action Plan \(BAP\) Reporting Round](#) was finally published in May, six months later than expected, and showed 42% of priority habitats and 24% of priority species are still declining.

In June Link submitted a [response](#) to the Biodiversity chapter of the [National Ecosystem Assessment](#) (NEA). Although Link could see the merit for a separate chapter on biodiversity, we were disappointed with the current draft and suggested that a shift in the focus of the chapter was needed to illustrate the central role of biodiversity in ecosystem services.

Link continues to engage with Natural England's Biodiversity Integration Groups (BIGs), although we have raised the concerns we have on the role of the EBS framework with the Director for Biodiversity at Natural England.

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”

The quarter began with Link’s Land Use Planning Group concentrating on a response to the consultation on a new [Planning Policy Statement \(PPS\) for the natural environment](#). The new PPS was published for consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) back in March. Despite the change in government since then, we still felt it was important to formally submit Link’s views on the PPS. We especially highlighted the need for a planning system that delivers biodiversity and landscape protection and enhancement. Link’s full response to the PPS is available on our [website](#).

The new government means big changes for England’s planning system, presenting Link with both opportunities and challenges. In May Link hosted a workshop on the future of land use planning to review these changes and the implications they will have for the natural environment. Link is now beginning work on a new publication; our *Vision for the future of planning*, to be launched and presented to government and all relevant stakeholders later this year. Link’s land use planning activities will be stepping up a gear over the coming months as we take every opportunity to influence new planning reform for the benefit of the natural environment.

Marine

© Sally Sharrock

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

“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”

Work continues apace for Link’s Marine Legislation Working Group on the implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act. This quarter we submitted a [Joint Links response](#) to the pre-consultation discussion paper on the draft UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS). Link expressed a number of concerns with the draft, including its lack of steer and insufficient integration of sustainable development and the ecosystem-based approach. Defra is now re-drafting the MPS ahead of a formal consultation over the summer.

Earlier this year, Natural England and JNCC published their Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Project draft Ecological Network Guidance. The draft guidance excluded nearly all mobile species as features for which MCZs should be selected; an issue that greatly concerned Link. We outlined these concerns in a [briefing on mobile marine species](#), which was sent to the Board members of Natural England and JNCC as well as the Marine Protected Area Science Advisory Panel. Link was disappointed that these concerns were not taken on board, and that the final version of the [MCZ Ecological Network Guidance](#), which was published in May, still excludes nearly all mobile species. Link will continue to call for the regional MCZ projects to locate MCZs so as to meet the conservation needs of mobile species.

In May Link had an encouraging meeting with Defra’s Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Team, during which Defra agreed with us on a number of the points we had made in our [response](#) to the UK Government and Devolved Administrations’ consultation on the draft MSFD Regulations earlier this year. The final [Marine Strategy Regulations](#) have now been laid before Parliament and are due to come into force in July.

Link members attended the launch event of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) in June. Following the launch, Link had an introductory meeting with the MMO Chief Executive and other key staff where we were able to outline our priorities for implementation of the Marine Act and our expectations of the MMO.

Link published a new leaflet in June; [Marine Planning Principles](#), which is being distributed to key marine stakeholders. We are also launching a new series of Marine Act Bulletins to be sent to MPs to gain and maintain their support for the Marine Act. The first bulletin in the series, *‘Making the Marine Acts Work: the path to effective implementation’*, summarises the provisions within the Act and outlines what needs to be done to implement the legislation effectively.

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”

The [Flood and Water Management Bill](#) received Royal Assent in April; Link was pleased that following much campaigning by a number of Link members, *Clause 38* was retained in the new Act, enabling the Environment Agency to undertake environmental works even where there is no flood risk benefit.

The Act also includes a new emphasis on Local Authorities as leads for Local Flood Risk, gives new *Sustainable Development Duty* on all Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Authorities and introduces a clear legal justification for water industry social tariffs e.g. those that protect vulnerable customers. Link was pleased with what remained in the Act, to both broaden the approach taken to tackling flood risk and to continue creating habitats.

In June Link attended the [CIWEM hydropower conference](#), at which a number of presentations were given, including one by Blueprint for Water partner, the Angling Trust. Outcomes from the conference will be submitted to the Environment Agency’s [consultation on hydropower](#). The Blueprint coalition is responding to this consultation, suggesting that ‘run of river’ hydropower can play a small part in contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, so long as there are only minimal adverse effects to aquatic systems.

Whales

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Acting Chair: Mark Simmonds, WDGS
Secretary: Joanna Fisher

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

The main focus for Link’s Whales Working Group this quarter was the [62nd Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission](#) (IWC62), which took place in Agadir, Morocco in June. Ahead of IWC62, Link sent a number of briefings to Defra officials, including an [‘NGO Briefing to the UK Government: Key issues for the 62nd meeting of the IWC’](#) and [‘NGO Priority Issues for IWC62 \(aside from the Chair/Vice-Chair’s Proposal on the Future of the IWC\)’](#). We also met with the new Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP to discuss our concerns with the [Proposal on the Future of the IWC](#), and had several useful meetings with the new UK IWC Commissioner, Nigel Gooding.

A number of Link members attended IWC62 and two Link/NGO representatives joined the UK IWC delegation. Link was pleased that Richard Benyon MP was also in attendance at priority meetings. One of the key items on the table for consideration at IWC62 was the [Proposal on the Future of the IWC](#), which Link had significant concerns with. If accepted, the proposal would have legitimised commercial whaling for the first time in more than 25 years and could have set precedents for the resurrection of large-scale commercial whaling industries worldwide. The Commission was unable to reach consensus on the Proposal at the Annual Meeting and it was agreed that work on this topic would be postponed until the 2011 meeting.

Another item on the agenda at IWC62 was the consideration of the request for revised quotas for the Greenlandic hunts. A quota was agreed of nine humpback whales per year to be hunted in Greenland until 2012 - a total of 27 whales over three years.

Working Groups

Wildlife trade

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Chair: Rob Atkinson, RSPCA
Vice Chair: Cathy Williamson, WDCS
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”

In May Link attended the Defra Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) meeting of conservationists and traders, at which the Chair of Link’s Wildlife Trade Working Group made a statement on behalf of the group, thanking the UK delegation for efforts during the fifteenth CITES meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP15) in March, and recognising the difficulties that were faced around EU coordination.

The main focus of discussions at the JLG meeting was the outcomes of CoP15 and consideration of the next stages. Defra indicated that it had had some successes around e-trading proposals, but agreed with the NGOs that CoP15 had produced disappointing results.

JNCC has recently invited Link to help identify the priorities for the enforcement of CITES wildlife crimes in the UK, through JNCC’s [Wildlife Law Enforcement Working Group](#) (WLEWG). The WLEWG aims to bring together Statutory and Non-Governmental Organisations dealing with wildlife crime in the UK and agree the top priorities for enforcement of crimes of conservation importance. These priorities will then be fed into the National Wildlife Crime Unit strategic assessment.

Link News

Link Secretariat

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Link’s Management Committee held an action-packed away day on 24 June at Plantlife’s offices in Salisbury. Discussions during the day focused on up-coming work priorities for Link, including the Natural Environment White Paper and our response to the spending cuts. Work is now continuing at full throttle on both of these issues and our response to the spending cuts will be published at our 30th anniversary parliamentary event on 14 July.

An updated version of our most popular publication, [Making the Link](#), will be launched at our anniversary event, which is being hosted by our Vice President, Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer, in the House of Lords. The new *Making the Link* reviews the work and celebrates the successes of Link over the past 30 years and will be published on our website following the event.

We were delighted to welcome another volunteer, Jacqueline Caine, to the Link team in June. The work our volunteers do for us continues to be invaluable, especially during these busy times.

Link’s [reference library](#), containing nearly 2000 hard-copy publications from a wide range of stakeholders is now live on our website. Both members and non-members can use the service to search and borrow publications. For more information, visit our [Resources Centre](#).



Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)

NIEL celebrated its 20th anniversary at its AGM and annual conference on 23 June. Prior to the AGM, NIEL produced its [Annual Report](#) and a major report for funders on the last five years of work. NIEL's strategic plan for the next three years is also nearing completion. In support of this NIEL is undertaking significant work on improving its efficiency and effectiveness in the way the office and organisation is run, and is submitting funding applications for both NIEA and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. In addition, NIEL has submitted an application to the Building Change Trust on facilitating the eNGO sector to evolve ways to deal with funding pressures and deliver improved messages to promote societal change in behaviour.

NIEL has commissioned a report on the eNGO sector in Northern Ireland which will also help efforts to ensure that the sector thrives despite funding pressures and is able to deliver improved environmental outputs. Sue Christie, Director of NIEL, is also 'coordinating lead author' for the Northern Ireland chapter of the UK National Ecosystem Assessment, which is a major piece of work but which should ultimately be a strong tool for environmental protection. The NI Sustainable Development Strategy has finally been adopted and work continues on an Implementation Plan which will be consulted on over the summer. The Forestry Bill is now law, and the Wildlife and Environment Bill is progressing, with further deliberations planned for the autumn; hare coursing is to be banned, but the hare will not be granted additional protection and snares will not be banned. Numerous other pieces of legislation are progressing, although the Review of Public Administration is 'suspended' and will not proceed in its entirety by the target time of 2011.

Wales Environment Link (WEL)

All WEL Working Groups have been contributing to development of the WEL Policy Priorities document, which is nearing completion. WEL representatives have been meeting with Assembly Members and party officials to discuss development of the parties' manifestos in advance of the 2011 Assembly Election. A representative of the Climate Change Working Group has been invited to sit on the Third Sector Climate Change Leadership Group. The Land Use Working Group gave written and oral evidence to the Rural Development Sub-Committee's inquiry into CAP reform this quarter.

A new Cross Party Group for Biodiversity, initiated by WEL, held their first meeting in the Assembly on 19 May, which was attended by a range of stakeholders including statutory bodies, local Councillors, NGOs, AMs and Assembly Committee staff. The Marine Working Group is pleased to be re-establishing their three Marine Officer posts, thanks to new funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust. In April, members of the Marine Working Group had two requests from Assembly Members to meet and discuss marine priorities, following a mail out of "call to action" cards. The group contributed to the Joint Links response to the Marine Policy Statement pre-consultation document in May.

The Environment Strategy Working Group met in April to work on a response to the Sustainability Committee's inquiry into the Wales Environment Strategy Action Plan. Representatives of the network met with Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing in May to discuss biodiversity, climate change, Severn Tidal Power, Waste, the Welsh Assembly Government's Marine Protected Area Strategy and their new Natural Environment Framework.

Scottish Environment Link (SEL)

SEL's report on effective planning for marine renewable energy, [Avoiding Conflicts in the Marine Environment](#), was launched on 17 June to an audience from the renewables sector, government agencies, and SEL's membership. The report's vision is to create a thriving industry that will help reduce the causes of climate change and bring secure long-term jobs, whilst safeguarding a diverse and productive sea. SEL's new Marine Policy Advocacy Officer is now in post, supporting the Marine Taskforce in monitoring the implementation of the new Marine Act. The Marine Taskforce has commented on two consultations - the [Marine Nature Conservation Strategy](#), and '[Marine Protected Areas in the seas around Scotland](#)', and contributed to the Joint Links response to the pre-consultation on the draft UK Marine Policy Statement. The Sustainable Land Use Taskforce is continuing preparations for its conference in November on the SLU Strategy and has responded to the Scottish Government LUS SEA Scoping report. SEL's Single Outcome Agreements Taskforce is currently raising funds in order to commission an audit of Scottish Local Authority Single Outcome Agreements.

At SEL's AGM in June, Deborah Long was appointed by members as the new SEL Chair, accompanied by Dan Barlow as Vice Chair and Paul Ritchie as Treasurer. Ian McCall and David Downie both stepped down from the Board. The Scottish Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill has now been published and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Taskforce is following the Bill closely for deer management and non-native species concerns. SEL's Environmental Funders Taskforce has been in discussions with the Big Lottery Fund regarding mainstreaming good environmental practice in their programmes. SEL's rolling manifesto is in the process of being drafted by members in advance of the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary elections.