

# Wildlife and Countryside Link Direction Statement 2010 - 2012

Presented by Paul de Zylva, Chair  
January 2010

*“Bringing together organisations in the UK to protect and enhance wildlife and landscape, and to further the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside.”*

## Do you remember John Lennon's assassination in 1980?

Six months before Lennon died CNN began a 24 hour news service just in time to report on the US-led boycott of the Moscow Olympics and, in August, the rise of the Solidarity movement from Gdansk's Lenin shipyard. In September, Iran and Iraq were too busy sparking an eight year war to pay heed to Bob Marley singing Redemption Song for the last time before his death.

In October, Bruce Springsteen hit the road with The River, his album of hopes and failed dreams just before Ronald Regan secured the White House in November. In a Mexican zoo, Xengli was the first natural birth in captivity of a giant panda outside China. And on 29 March Wildlife and Countryside Link sprang into life.

## Weird science and common sense

Link's 30th year coincides with 2010 being the International Year of Biodiversity and since 1980, thousands of actions by millions of people have put the 'environmental issues' which Link champions on the agenda. In less than a decade knowledge and coverage of climate change has gone from zero to zenith.

Success putting the issues on the agenda is tempered by the science which shows a human-induced double trouble of nature being forced into a corner and our common climate going up the wall. More evidence on the state of our environment is hardly needed when as Isaac Asimov said, "*The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.*"

Without belittling current economic hardships, the likely havoc caused by collapses in natural systems will put bolstering the banks in the shade. Progress would have been made had the airtime and political attention given to man-made economic chaos instead been spent working out how to reconnect people with nature and to succeed economically without pushing nature to the edge.

There are some signs that courageous politicians, bureaucrats and economists who see a bigger balance sheet than the one for just the year ahead, do want to act and are not merely asking for more evidence.



# From double trouble to double helix

In response to its members, Link wants to:

- Bolster the UK's stance and lead role in international negotiations on animal welfare, wildlife and trade
- Boost debate and action on the role of nature and show the mutual gains for people and nature
- Work with those businesses, farmers, landowners, politicians and scientists who are ready to match our commitment to turn vice into virtue through our double helix of campaigning and policy influence.

Link is aware that the economic slowdown is pressing our members, governments and other institutions to change and that there is a tendency to be inward looking just when we need to unite and focus. We also know that public faith in government and institutions is low just at the time when these need to take a lead.

That is why Link's eyes are fixed on real needs which do not go away during recession: to move the natural health service which sustains and improves life to centre stage in policy and politics; to protect species and habitats for their own worth even when price tags are affixed; and, to pursue a sustainable economic recovery in all true meanings of that much misused term.

## Shared space

Some things will continue. Link will remain led, funded and managed by its members and independent as a result. Our basic strength will be our ability to cooperate and find shared space between each of our organisations' own activities. And we will continue to unify the best from our members drawn from our diverse and, at times, disparate coalition of interests covering members with a strong people, access and recreation approach and those with a more species and habitats focus - a creative exchange summed up well by Byron:

*“ There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, There is a rapture on the lonely shore, There is society where none intrudes, By the deep sea, and music in its roar: I love not man the less, but nature more, ”*

The Dark, Blue Sea - Lord Byron



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## Cutting edge

Some things will change. There are reputational risks for Link and its members if we content ourselves with protecting a declining quantity and quality of habitats and species on land or at sea. Members want Link to find a new edge to its campaigns work and to be clear about which consultations and policy work will most advance our aims.

Link will be proactive in supporting members and identifying where its double helix of campaigning and policy work needs to happen. And when the issues have not changed significantly and the solutions remain largely the same, we will avoid repetitive consultations and point to our solutions and unfinished business.

What you will see:

- **Bolder campaigning** - to define the agenda and unify members on common ground and opportunities
- **Selective policy work** - that influences policy without being stuck in perpetual cycles of consultations
- **Political engagement** - on our terms and by being in the corridors of power but not lost in them
- **Clearer messaging** - to develop compelling communications to help widen support for our solutions

And to do this, Link's:

- Working groups will cooperate more on campaigns, policies and skill-shares
- Management Committee will think and act more strategically
- Director and Secretariat will be more proactive in supporting and guiding members and advocating externally on behalf of Link and its aims

Members want Link and the collective positions it advocates to carry more weight with Government, and to be acted upon because they are taken more seriously. Our long-term objective is to ensure that the issues which Link and its members represent are recognised as part of good government.



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# To 2015: Link's Five Year Strategic Objectives

Link will steer a course towards our collective long-term goal. Along the route we will work towards strategic objectives built upon the desires and aims of our members.

Link as a coalition of environmental organisations will work together to achieve the following five objectives:

- To present an integrated vision for sustainable land and water use that promotes effective mechanisms for supporting landscape-scale natural and historic environment conservation
- To help protect and connect marine species and habitats through the promotion of an ecosystem based approach to marine conservation
- To raise the political profile of the ethical and economic value of biodiversity and the socio-economic and ecological impacts of its loss
- To promote the delivery of access to nature that is compatible with the conservation of wildlife, reconnects society with the environment, and enhances human health and welfare
- To raise the UK's commitment to wildlife protection, animal welfare and respect for animals

Link as a service provider will work towards achieving the following four objectives:

- To improve the advocacy of agreed collective messages from the environmental voluntary sector to those who can help us bring about the change we desire
- To add value to the work of members by facilitating consensus on policies and providing support in the production of joint positions on a wide range of issues
- To provide a safe forum for members to exchange information, and develop and promote action that could effect positive change
- To maintain a high standard of service whilst developing the Secretariat's capacity to meet the needs of the membership

# Ways of working

In the period from 2010 to 2012, Link will support seven specialist groups, all of which will be Working Groups. The Secretariat will encourage cross-working group dialogue to help develop common themes, give mutual support, and deliver on complementary aims.



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**The Biodiversity Working Group** will work to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by working to improve the UK BAP process and will seek to ensure that the England Biodiversity Strategy is fully implemented. The group will lead a Post-2010 Campaign that will seek to push biodiversity up the political agenda and give it the rightful recognition at the highest level.

**The Agriculture Working Group** will work to support and deliver a sustainable, high quality, multi-functional rural environment through monitoring policy on rural development, agri-environment, bioenergy, and animal welfare standards. The group will lead a CAP Reform Campaign that will call for a clear route map with measurable milestones for the CAP to evolve into a European Sustainable Land Management Policy by 2020.



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**The Water Working Group** will work 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. Through the work of the Blueprint for Water coalition, the group will continue to advocate the 10 steps to sustainable water.

**The Land Use Planning Working Group** will work to conserve the natural and historic environment by working to improve the national planning system for the benefit of biodiversity and landscape. The group will seek to ensure the implementation of environmentally-benign national planning policy and the improvement of existing policies, and will monitor progress of the eco-towns agenda.



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**The Marine Legislation Working Group** will work 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. The group will also monitor marine BAP activities and will consider its role in the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

**The Whales Working Group** will work to ensure better protection of cetaceans including through the reform of International Whaling Commission - the international body responsible for regulating the hunting of whales - into a conservation body. The group will also address other issues relating to cetacean conservation and welfare, such as ocean noise.



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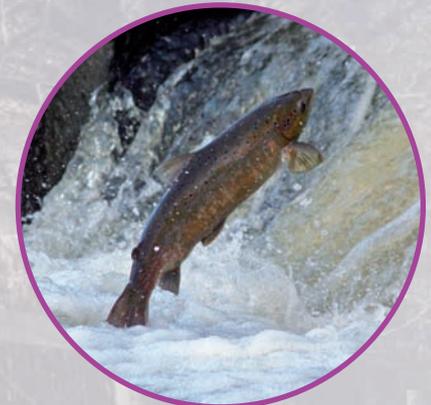
**The Wildlife Trade Working Group** will work to improve the conservation of wild flora and fauna threatened by international trade by seeking to ensure the proper implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in the UK.

Progress on Link's collective goals and objectives will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, details of which can be found in the Link Operational Strategy 2010-2012.

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Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is a coalition of major environmental non-governmental organisations, united by their common interest in the conservation and enjoyment of the natural and historic environment. Our members manage over 690,000 hectares of land, collectively employ 10,000 full-time staff, have the help of 170,000 volunteers and the support of over 8 million people in the UK.

Link maximises the efficiency and effectiveness of the environmental voluntary sector through collaboration. By bringing members together on policy areas of interest to them, we provide them with a forum to develop a collective view on national and international issues affecting wildlife, countryside and the marine environment, to exchange information, and to work together to develop policies to influence domestic and relevant EU and international policies.

By working together, Link provides members with a stronger single voice to effect policy change.

Founded in 1980, Link will be celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2010.



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