

Wildlife and
Countryside



Wildlife and Countryside Link Operational Strategy 2010 – 2012

Compiled by Jodie Bettis
November 2009

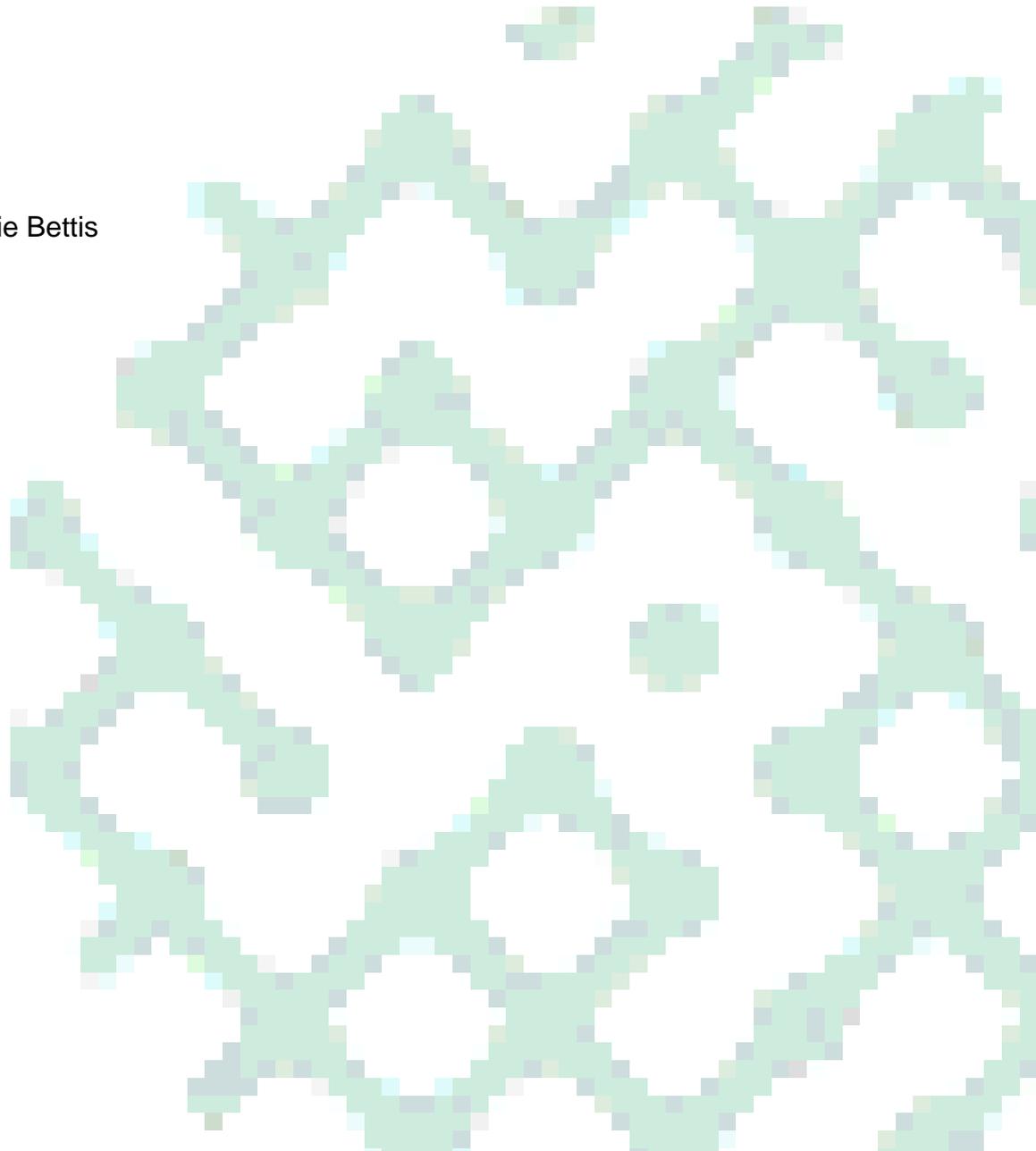


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1. Foreword by the Director

Within weeks of being appointed Director of Wildlife and Countryside Link in September 2008, I was asked by Link's Trustees to lead the Forward Planning Process and produce a work programme for the organisation to take it through the next three years. With the help of the Secretariat and Management Committee, Link filled the summer and autumn with group workshops, management meetings and online surveys, and I had many inspiring conversations with members from across the broad spectrum of organisations that come together under the umbrella of Link.

These forward planning activities provided an excellent opportunity to highlight the challenges ahead and provide an aspirational framework within which Link, as a united coalition of environmental organisations, could strive towards its shared goals. The reframing of Link's mission is a product of those conversations and is set out in Link's Direction Statement to 2020.

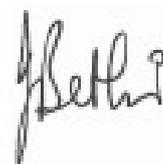
In listening to its members, Link has produced what I believe is an ambitious and achievable Operational Strategy for the next three years. Members want Link, and the issues it represents, to be taken more seriously as part of good government. Members want the government to fear failure on these issues more and not merely to respect Link or see Link as a convenient way to gain support from the environment sector for its policies or to keep our 37 member organisations quiet. We responded by devising a Strategy that we hope will support Link's overarching goal to make it politically desirable to take action to protect and conserve the natural environment.

Through our Working Groups, Link will campaign to get the natural environment as highly placed on the agenda as climate. In particular, we wish to move beyond halting species and habitat loss towards the recovery of biodiversity at a landscape scale. To do this the Common Agricultural Policy will need to evolve into a European Sustainable Land Management Policy and the UK's rivers, lakes and wetlands must meet the ecological objectives of the Water Framework Directive. At the seascape scale, the Marine and Coastal Access Act will need to be fully implemented so an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas can give our marine wildlife the opportunity to adapt to climate change.

I have been encouraged by the enthusiasm shown for coalition campaigning, particularly the goal to push biodiversity up the political agenda. This enthusiasm must now be turned in to action. Link acknowledges the desired change in approach to engaging with those who we seek to influence and Link, as a service provider, will provide the necessary support.

We will introduce a Skills Share Programme to strengthen the network, a Political Strategy Group to sharpen our campaigning teeth and an Enforcement Group that will be ready to defend hard-won environmental laws. In addition, we will consider the expansion of the Link Secretariat to include a dedicated Parliamentary Officer and through regular monitoring we will review all our roles in the delivery of this Strategy.

I am delighted to bring you this new Strategy for Link and I look forward to working with all Link's members and partners to achieve our collective goals in the months and years to come.



Jodie Bettis

2. Introduction

This Strategy and its guiding Direction Statement aim to help Link and its members take on the challenges that lay ahead as the political and economic landscapes shift around us. The Operational Strategy (2010-2012) is guided by Link's Direction Statement to 2020 and is informed by the work programmes and advocacy plans of Link's specialist Working Groups. It is a dynamic document which will be reviewed and refreshed each year as we move towards Link's 10 year Strategic Goal of ensuring that Link, and the issues it represents, are taken more seriously as part of good government.

The document has two main chapters. Chapter 3 ('The Review') describes where we are now and the challenges that Link must step up to. It begins with a brief look at who our competitors are and what is on the horizon for Link and its members, and is followed by an analysis of Link's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and strengths as well as providing a snapshot of our financial position before contextualising why it was felt that now would be the right time to bring members together to decide our collective future.

The goals, objectives, and targets, and their monitoring, are the subject of the fourth and probably the most important chapter in this publication ('The Strategy'). We set out how we will work and how we will be structured both in relation to our governance and our activity hubs. Members have proposed how they wish to work together over the next three years and we reiterate the principles within which Link agrees to operate as a coalition and a service for its members. Finally, we consider future funding gaps and undertake a risk analysis to inform the implementation of the Strategy that will help set us Link on its course to push the natural environment up the agenda.

3. The Review

3.1 Background

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) will mark its 30th anniversary in 2010. Link began as Wildlife Link in 1980, taking over from two existing umbrella bodies, the Council for Nature and the Council for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo). The formation of Link was driven by Lord Melchett whose position in the House of Lords convinced him that better co-ordination was needed between voluntary organisations with similar core objectives.

In 1982 Countryside Link was formed to look after the interests of the countryside and in 1990 the two organisations merged, creating the organisation that we have today whose interests span the breadth of wildlife and countryside issues. Link members continue to grow their supporter base¹ and work on an increasing variety of policy issues².

With such a diverse membership, Link undertakes a "stock-take" of Link's collective priorities and work areas every three years. During this forward planning process, suggestions from members are synthesised by the Link Secretariat and Management Committee into a forward plan proposal, which the membership refine and then endorse at Link's Annual General Meeting.

¹ The full list of Link's current members can be found at <http://www.wcl.org.uk/our-members.asp>

² A summary of Link's current work areas can be found at <http://www.wcl.org.uk/currentworkareas.asp>

3.2 External Context

3.2.1 Competitor analysis

Link is a unique organisation – it is the only umbrella body of its kind in England that has, over its 29 year history, remained a service to its member organisations rather than operating as an end in itself. Uncommonly, Link is member led and member funded, with a Management Committee elected from the membership and the Chairs of all its working groups led by elected members. As a network, its constituent parts have diverse interests across natural and historic environment conservation, animal welfare and the access and recreation sectors, yet the goals of Link are shared.

Although Link has a unique way of governing, funding and delivering its operations it is not without competitors of sorts, which have the similar aims and aspirations to effect positive change for the benefit of the environment and people through working in partnerships or coalitions. Some coalitions are topic based, such as Stop Climate Chaos or WhaleWatch; others concentrate their activities around particular geographical areas, such as the UK European Environment Bureau (EEB-UK) or regional forums such as North West Environment Link.

Link covers many topics at an England and UK level and therefore focuses most of its efforts on influencing Westminster and Whitehall, as do the majority of its individual members. Larger members also work through Link's nearest equivalent – Green Alliance – on issues relating to climate, energy, waste and the natural environment.

However, Link members are aware of Green Alliance's predominant focus on climate change, working far less on Link issues. And despite campaign and policy successes and influence, Link is not perceived as a high level political operator. In both instances members have suggested that Link could step in to fill these perceived voids. This Strategy and its guiding Direction Statement aim to help Link and its members take on that challenge.

3.2.2 Horizon Scan

Link, with others, has successfully put its issues on the agenda such as marine legislation and the recognised need for CAP reform. Defending these gains and developing them presents the environment sector with a continual challenge.

Over time, public faith in politics, politicians and institutions has diminished, whether locally, nationally, at European or international levels. This has reached a low point just at the time when political leadership and action are most needed; the interest in 'localism' may offer ways to rebuild public faith and engagement.

A short-term preoccupation with UK elections and economic recovery does not disguise the need for consistent and transparent action, for example to avoid biodiversity collapse and man-made climate change. With centre right political parties in power or likely to be in power in many EU states, the balance between legislation / regulation and deregulation / the voluntary approach is open to debate.

Link can use strategic drivers, for example the economic agenda, to achieve gains for the environment. Better clarity of past campaigning strengths and weaknesses, along with improved horizon scanning, will help guide Link to work on the right things at the right time with the right people and to engender the right debates around the right priorities.

See Appendix 2 for a detailed horizon scan by Link.

3.3 Internal Context

3.3.1 SWOT analysis

Link has a track record of influence and success despite not having a high public profile nor its issues being especially high on the political agenda. Opportunities exist to demonstrate the importance of Link's issues to the economic, well being and quality of life debates which now straddle Whitehall (and Europe) and are not confined to Defra.

Link's membership covers a lot of bases and Link provides the means to focus collective aims. This can still be confusing for onlookers to understand and for us to communicate in simple terms. Economic downturn affects our members and Link's dependence on its members to carry out its work makes Link susceptible to the constraints which its members face.

Link members have in recent times felt less in control of the agenda and more on the backfoot, locked into consultation exercises. Members wish to strike the right balance between policy work and more overt campaigning. Link campaigns should be unmistakably Link and must be chosen by recognising our unique role.

Our campaigns put Link in pole position in communications with decision makers and play to the strength of the network and of the member organisations. By acting on members' enthusiasm, Link can occupy the space between member organisations' priorities and, in doing so, will strengthen its networking and facilitation role.

See Appendix 2 for a detailed SWOT analysis of Link.

3.3.2 Financial analysis

Link is member-led and member-funded. Members provide the majority proportion of Link's core income through an annual subscription and additional voluntary donations. A number of projects are also funded by the membership, such as the Blueprint for Water campaign and our Joint Links work. Non-member financial support is provided by Natural England which currently grants Link approximately 20 percent of its core costs through a one-year Memorandum of Agreement. In addition, Link's Marine Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator position is fully funded for three years (May 2007 - April 2010) by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust.

Since 2005, Link has ended the financial year on a surplus. This has led to Link building up its formerly depleted reserves to a healthy nine months of operating costs and should allow Link to weather the economic storm. All things being equal, it is forecast that Link will also end 2009 with a small surplus. In light of recent economic events and as an important consideration in the run up to the 2009 Forward Planning process, Link considered the risks to its income and conducted a funding gap exercise for the next three year planning period.

It was found that by operating a moderate budget and projecting forward by three years, Link will be operating on its reserves by 2012. This assumes that the Link office remains at its present location, that all current and future funding bids are unsuccessful, and that there are no further losses in member income. Results also assume that Natural England will continue to fund Link at the present levels and that salary bands will increase by an agreed inflation rate each year.

Therefore, additional income will be required should Link wish to:

- expand operations beyond the current level within the next three years, or;
- retain operations at the current level beyond 2012.

3.4 Rationale for devising a Link Strategy

The Strategy for 2010-12 restates Link's aims by providing a sharper focus to Link's natural environment work that binds all Link members, and explicitly sets out to raise the political stakes.

Against a backdrop of political and economic change, Link's three-year work programme (2007 – 2009) is coming to an end. Link took this opportunity to bring members together to review existing work areas to ensure that Link works on those issues of most importance to members and where Link can most 'add value'. The current programme expires in December 2009 and work to agree the 2010-2012 programme (the 2009 Forward Planning Review) was undertaken during the summer and autumn 2009³.

The Forward Planning process keeps Link's work relevant to its members and to the external environment. By being open to new issue areas for collective working and seeking to improve the way Link supports its membership, Link can better deliver the change that its members, and individual staff within those organisations, wish to achieve.

In producing a collectively agreed strategy, Link as a service provider will be better placed to:

- inform the membership of relevant current and anticipated developments in natural and historic environment conservation, animal welfare, and access and recreation policy;
- facilitate the consensus building process through which collective work and messages are agreed; and,
- advocate those messages to external audiences, primarily Whitehall and Westminster, whose decisions affect the environment.

Additionally, the process itself aimed to make Link as a coalition:

- a network that is well informed and confident of the strength of joint working;
- a cohesive body with a shared agenda which draws on and recognises its wide diversity of campaign goals; and,
- a collective of advocates that can articulate the consensus view on issues of importance to its supporters and key policy and decision makers.

³ Details of the consultation process and the participants involved can be found in Appendix 1.

4. The Strategy (2010-2012)

The 2009 Forward Planning Review helped Link to devise its collectively agreed long term direction and strategy for the next three year period i.e. 2010 to 2012. The resultant Direction Statement sets out Link's ambitions whilst the Operational Strategy guides the annual work plans from both a policy and campaigns (task-based) perspective and an organisational (resources-based) perspective. Together these documents identify what Link wishes to achieve as an umbrella organisation and helps guide the way in which we will work together.

This chapter sets out in detail Link's Operational Strategy for 2010-2012.

4.1 Strategic Goals, Objectives & Targets

Although this Strategy will be operational from 2010 to 2012, Link has taken the opportunity presented by the 2009 Forward Planning Review process to refocus its mission and ambitions over the next decade. Link and its members will steer a course towards a collective long term goal and along the route will work towards meeting a set of strategic objectives built upon the desires and aims of Link's specialist working groups.

4.1.1 To 2020: Link's Ten Year Strategic Goal

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 therefore,

“to ensure that the issues which Link and its members represent are recognised as part of good government.”

Members want the Government to fear failure on environmental issues more and not merely to respect Link or see Link as a convenient way to gain support from the environment sector for its policies or to keep our 37 member organisations quiet.

Link's collective goal is to raise the political cost of failure to protect and conserve the natural environment, in other words, to make it politically desirable as part of good government to take action to protect, conserve and improve the natural environment and welfare protection.

4.1.2 To 2015: Link's Five Year Objectives

Link as a coalition of environmental organisations will work together to achieve the following five strategic objectives for 2010-2015;

- 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 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 strategic objectives for 2010-2015;

- 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

Progress on these collective goals and objectives will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, details of which are explained in Section 4.2.5.

4.2 Ways of Working

4.2.1 External Operations: Coalition Activities

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

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 (see Appendix 4 for the Biodiversity Campaign Proposal).

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 (see Appendix 5 for the CAP Reform Campaign Proposal).

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 (see Appendix 6 for details on the Blueprint for Water coalition).

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.

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..

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.

Each Working Group will be allocated a member of the Secretariat who will work with the elected Chair of the Group to help deliver both the group's objectives and its contribution to the delivery of the Link Strategy. Cross-group working, with Secretariat support, will also help Link remain flexible and responsive to change, help minimise repetition and capitalise on opportunities that ensure Link's messages to its external audiences are consistent across the spectrum of Link's specialist groups.

As of December 2009, the following groups will cease to operate and will therefore no longer be reported upon by the Link Secretariat;

The **Farming & Rural Development Group** will be renamed the **Agriculture Working Group** to signal its move into a campaign support role for the Link CAP Reform Campaign. The group will streamline its activities and representation on external forums, taking collective action only on issues directly connected to influencing reform of the CAP.

The **Marine Task Force** will be renamed the **Marine Legislation Working Group** to signal its move away from a group that campaigns for the introduction of marine legislation and into a group that works to ensure its full implementation.

Landscape Scale Conservation Steering Group – work to develop an agreed understanding of landscape scale conservation will be complete by December 2009. How this work evolves and informs Working Groups will then be a topic for the Chair and Vice Chairs of the Groups to decide and deliver.

Woodland Virtual Sub-Group – engagement with policy relating to the (re)creation and management of this habitat will take place under the auspices of the Biodiversity Working Group through its work on the BAP process and the Agriculture Working Group through its work on a European Sustainable Land Management Policy.

Badgers & Bovine TB Virtual Sub-Group – the monitoring of policy relating to the health and welfare of mammals affected by bovine tuberculosis will be through the Agriculture Working Group.

Bycatch Virtual Sub-Group – Link will no longer monitor developments or activities in this area of marine policy.

Link's organisational structure for 2010-2012 is included in Appendix 3. Although this illustrates well the relationships between the Secretariat and elected officials i.e. Trustees and Chairs & Vice Chairs of Working Groups, the interrelationships *between* the working groups and the linking of common aims is better illustrated by Figure 1.

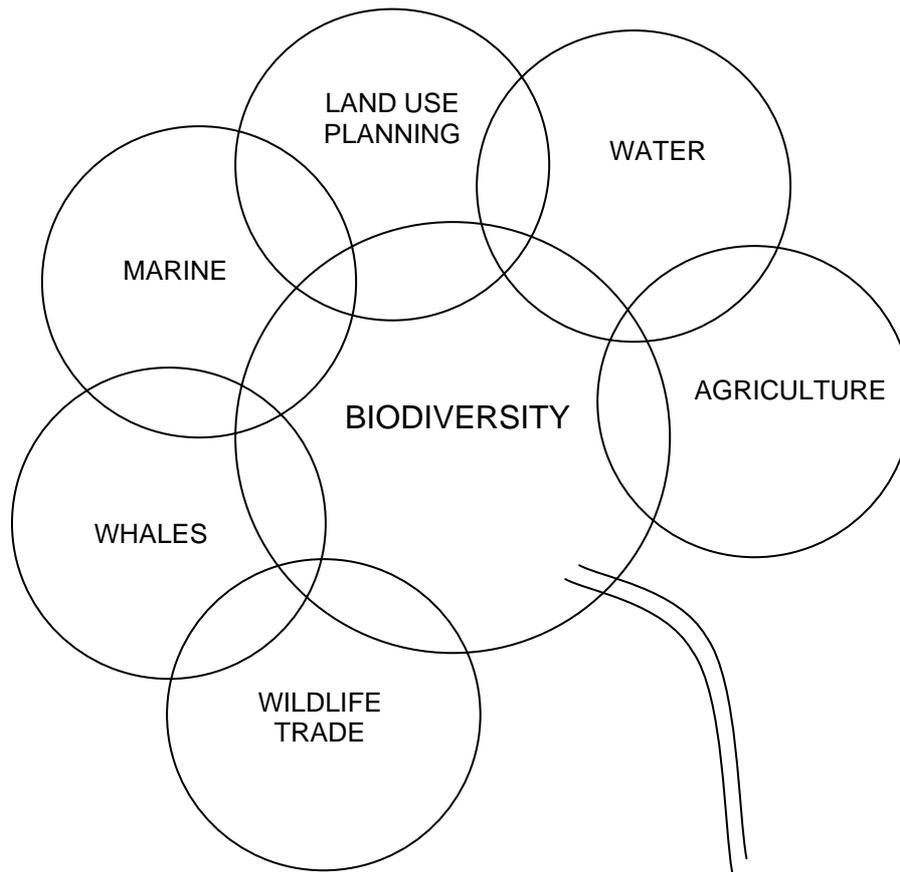


Fig 1 – *The Link Flower of Interdependency* – Each petal represents a Link specialist Working Group for 2010 and how their aims and activities interrelate with each other.

4.2.2 External Operations: New ideas and activities

Investing in the membership

In the period from 2010 to 2012, Link will seek to facilitate the sharing of skills across the NGO network to better equip the collective to mount more effective campaigns and to engage in more meaningful dialogue with political decision makers and the media. Link will not offer 'training courses' but rather we will work to retain and build on the skills we have both within the Secretariat and across the membership as a whole.

During the review process, members expressed a high interest in getting together to share skills on campaigning and parliamentary work, as well as improving coalition activities around media and communications work and it may be that other needs arise during the period of this Strategy. This is not entirely new for Link – Working Groups and Task Forces groups often dedicate time to preparing for collective activities and seek to bring in additional skills as and when required. The change is that skills development will be done more consciously and routinely than it has been done before.

The Skills Share Programme would offer these collective preparations as non-policy based workshops at regular intervals over the next three years. The workshops will be co-ordinated by the Link Secretariat and led by experts from both within and beyond the membership. The aim of a successful Skills Share Programme is to strengthen the capacity of the sector and make Link a more proactive and effective coalition.

During the period 2010-2012, Link will consider holding workshops on the following areas:

- Parliamentary work
- Campaigning
- Media & communications
- Legal work
- European work (in partnership with EEB UK & Green Alliance)

Supporting enforcement action

Link will also consider a potential new area of work which has been identified by the membership as having a bearing on the activities of all the Working Groups: environmental law enforcement.

Link will consider the creation of an “Enforcement Task Force” (or similar way of working) which is fleet of foot and able to take up opportunities to support members whether on CITES, breaches of planning rules, rolling back of EU Directives, threats to SSSIs etc. At present it is envisaged that any enforcement work would be on a case-by-case basis with members coming together to work on specific breaches or soon-to-be breaches of environmental legislation. The ‘task and finish’ type group would therefore be comprised of those interested in the case at hand rather than a constant coalition of the same members and individuals.

Enforcement work would be strongly guided by the work of the related specialist group – for example WFD infringements would be guided by the water group, NERC biodiversity duty breaches guided by the biodiversity group etc. – and would build on the Skills Share Programme, particularly the legal work. It is also expected that partnership working with like-minded organisations and external advisors would be useful.

Political Strategy Group

As a means of sharpening our campaigning teeth, Link will establish a Political Strategy Group whose remit will be to consider how to raise the political profile of the natural environment and to come up with some practical proposals for coalition action. Rather than an information sharing forum, this will be a relatively small group made up of a select number of people with specific capacity/expertise in this area. As such the make up of the group may vary to reflect specific expertise required at any one time. Proposals for action will be reported to Link’s Management Committee in the same way as other Working Groups, with action most likely delivered through other Link mechanisms.

For details of how each of Link’s groups and forums, Secretariat and Management Committee relate to each other, see Link’s Organisational Chart in Appendix 3.

Other Considerations

However much we try to predict the future and plan accordingly, over the next three years Link will need to be open to acting on and reacting to unexpected events. This may mean re-phasing or withdrawing Secretariat support for particular projects or topics in order to give more attention to new ones, merging groups and activities more, or adopting different ways of working. Therefore, this Operational Strategy will remain a dynamic document and will be refreshed annually in light of monitoring and review processes.

Throughout the Forward Planning Process members highlighted the strong desire for Link to be more proactive in setting the agenda and more selective in responding to consultations. Member organisations are preparing for the expected new rounds of policy debate with the post-election government and want Link to sharpen its campaigning teeth whilst still retaining the quieter forms of policy influencing, the two are of course linked. The desire to engage in more collective campaigning activities is evidenced in this Strategy by the stated ambition

(by the groups) to switch from the current reactive policy 'monitoring' and 'responding' mode to a proactive 'campaigning' and 'advocacy' mode.

The high level of enthusiasm shown for the proposed Link campaigns for 2010 to 2012, particularly the campaign to push biodiversity up the political agenda, must now be turned in to action. Through the annual work planning process much of the detail of Link's new campaigns will be agreed, nevertheless, the desired change in approach to engaging with those who Link seeks to influence has been acknowledged by the Secretariat and Trustees, and as a service provider, Link will seek to provide the necessary support.

Link has had many successes over its almost 30 year history. Link will investigate what has made past Link campaigns successful or otherwise and will consider its proactive campaigning and advocacy work objectively with the aid of external experts as part of the Skills Share Programme. The specific role of its member organisation CEOs and senior level staff in Link campaigns and strategic forums will be examined, as will the idea of developing and advocating position statements on key issues regardless of the specifics of individual consultations.

4.2.3 Internal Operations: Governance and Secretariat Management

In 2010 – 2012, Link will aim to retain a full quota of eight Management Committee members elected from and by the membership to serve as Trustees, and will include Link's Chair, Deputy Chair and Treasurer. In addition, Link will retain three parliamentary Vice Presidents selected from across the three main political parties.

In 2010, Link will review the efficacy of the Policy Directors' group which was set up in 2007 in response to members' request during the 2006 Forward Planning Review, to act as source of higher level strategic advice to Link. Through this forum, senior staff from member organisations 'horizon scan' the broad remit of the Link membership to provide Link with an opportunity to better anticipate likely areas where coalition working would be beneficial and to recalibrate its strategy if necessary. Policy Directors will be encouraged to use their first meeting in early 2010 to review how they are working and how they can support Link's Strategy.

Link will continue to be staffed by a professional, dedicated Secretariat comprising four full time members of staff - a Director, two Policy & Campaigns Co-ordinators, and an Information & Office Co-ordinator.

A number of members indicated during the review process a wish to have a Link Parliamentary Officer within the Link Secretariat. New funds would be required and it has been highlighted that should the post be funded from core income i.e. from Link member subscriptions and donations, this could raise problems for those organisations with parliamentary staff as they may not make use of the service. Other members may feel there is a case for seeking non-member/external funding for a new parliamentary post on a three year pilot basis if it were felt that successful delivery of the Link Strategy 2010-2012 warranted an increase in capacity in this area. Therefore, Link will continue to keep under review the consideration of the appointment of a Parliamentary Officer within the Link Secretariat.

The review process indicated that there was little appetite to employ a European policy officer within the Link Secretariat, therefore, Link will not consider this appointment during the period of this Operational Strategy.

In both cases, Link will seek to ensure that knowledge and experience of parliamentary procedures and European policy making is kept within the Link network and more specifically that Link staff are appropriately trained to support Link work in both these areas.

4.2.4 Target Outcomes & Deliverables (2010-2012)

A summary table setting out three year work programmes of each of the Working Groups along the timeline of the Strategy is shown in Table 1 below. External drivers, as highlighted in Appendix 2, are included to help contextualise Link activities.

For the purpose of strategic organisational planning, group activities have been aggregated into six month blocks of overarching activities. Individual working group annual workplans will further breakdown these blocks into separate actions and objectives, dependent on the overall aims of the specialist groups.

Over the course of the next three years Link expects to be kept extremely busy delivering its agreed work programmes and responding to selected Government consultations. In addition to these activities, Link will continue to keep members informed through its monthly e-bulletins and quarterly reports, with the latter now circulated to Link's partners, funders and other interested stakeholders.

Facilitating meetings of Link's Working Groups and Task Forces and meeting external policy makers and decision takers will continue to be a core activity of Link, as will be the preparation of collective statements such as parliamentary briefings, position statements, reports and press releases. Link will also fulfil its legal obligation to produce and file Annual Reports and Financial Statements and will hold an Annual General Meeting in December each year as specified in its Constitution.

4.2.5 Monitoring the Strategy

The Secretariat will work with the Chairs of the Groups to ensure that annual workplans are in line with the Link Direction and Strategy and that both the aims and activities of each group contribute to the fulfilment of the organisation's five-year Strategic Objectives. In addition to annual workplans, each Working Group will produce clear advocacy plans for submission to Link's Management Committee with a constructive challenge process administered by the Committee. Workplans will no longer be scrutinised by the Management Committee but will instead be reviewed by Link's Director.

In order to help Link measure its performance as both an organisation and a coalition of members a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) has been selected from a cross section of Link's activities. These will help Link define and evaluate how successfully it is delivering the Operational Strategy. Each of the Strategic Objectives for 2010 to 2015 has associated KPIs which will be monitored on an annual basis as part of Link's regular internal review processes.

Table 2 below includes qualitative KPIs to monitor overall progress towards meeting Link coalition strategic objectives to 2015. Although aspirational, the target outcomes Link would like to see achieved by 2012 are broadly realistic and measurable. However, it is accepted that their achievement may not be entirely within Link's control.

Table 3 includes quantitative KPIs of annual progress towards meeting Link Secretariat strategic objectives to 2015. Annual targets have been set at a level that will allow us to measure Link's level of service to its members. In reality, however, the Link Secretariat can only offer up opportunities to its members to become involved in coalition work - it is really down to the membership how many statements / meetings, etc. are run each year.

Table 1: Three year work programme showing phases of working group activities against external drivers, which will be used as a management tool by the Link Secretariat and Management Committee to guide resource allocation across the period of this three-year Operational Strategy.

	2010	2011	2011	2012	2012
Policy areas	Drivers				
	<i>International Year of Biodiversity Planning Act implementation New Conservation PPS due M&CA Act implementation F&WM Act implementation LDED Act implementation Environmental Stewardship Review CITES COP15 PR09 implementation New UK Parliament Further PPS development CBD COP10 EC White Paper on CAP Reform EC 'White Paper' on CFP Reform IWC 62</i>		<i>UK White Paper on water policy Comprehensive Spending Review PSAs expire NPS development (aviation) Marine plans development Eco-towns construction begins? Aviation NPS implementation Review of LAAs IWC63</i>		<i>All NPSs designated UK MPA network designated WFD PoM report due EU CAP Reform negotiations EU CFP Reform negotiations EU Budget Review IWC64</i>
Land Use Planning	Monitoring / Responding	Monitoring / Responding	Monitoring / Responding	Monitoring	Monitoring
Agriculture	Advocacy	Policy Refresh	Policy Launch	Advocacy / Campaigning	Campaigning
Water	Monitoring / Preparation	Blueprint 2010 Conference	Advocacy / Campaigning	Campaigning / Review	Blueprint Event / Review
Biodiversity	Preparation / Review	Campaign Launch	Campaigning / Review	Campaigning / Monitoring	Review
Wildlife Trade	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring
Whales	Preparation	Monitoring	Preparation	Monitoring	Monitoring
Marine	Monitoring / Responding	Monitoring / Responding	Monitoring / Responding	Monitoring / Responding	Campaigning

Table 2: Summary table of qualitative key performance indicators of overall progress towards meeting Link coalition strategic objectives to 2015

Strategic objective	Key Performance Indicator	Target Outcome by 2012
<p>1. To present an integrated vision for sustainable land and water use that promotes effective mechanisms for supporting landscape-scale natural and historic environment conservation</p>	<p>Introduction of new effective legislation &/or policy</p> <p>Implementation of existing legislation &/or policy</p> <p>Meeting of EU obligations</p> <p>High level political profile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective Flood and Water Management Act introduced (in 2010) • A clear route map for the CAP to evolve into a European Sustainable Land Management Policy set as a high priority for Government • Planning Act implemented to the benefit of biodiversity, landscape and open spaces • Eco-towns are exemplar developments in ecologically appropriate locations • UK leads Europe in its implementation of the Water Framework Directive • Importance of landscape-scale conservation recognised and understood at the highest political level
<p>2. To help protect and connect marine species and habitats through the promotion of an ecosystem based approach to marine conservation</p>	<p>Implementation of existing legislation &/or policy</p> <p>High level political profile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK-wide Marine Policy Statement developed and adopted (by 2011) • Government on track to adopt marine plans in 2013. • Ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas designated • Cetacean conservation promoted across national Government and by the Government internationally
<p>3. To raise the political profile of the ethical and economic value of biodiversity and the socio-economic and ecological impacts of its loss</p>	<p>Implementation of existing legislation &/or policy</p> <p>Meeting of international obligations</p> <p>High level political profile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EBS is revised as an effective policy influencing framework across Government • A landscape-scale conservation project underway in each English region • Government adopts ambitious target to halt and reverse biodiversity loss • Robust Habitats and Birds Directives fully implemented in the UK • The value of all UK biodiversity recognised and understood at the highest political level
<p>4. To promote the delivery of access to nature that is compatible with conservation of wildlife, reconnects society with the environment, and enhances human health and welfare</p>	<p>Implementation of existing legislation &/or policy</p> <p>High level political profile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal access implementation on track to deliver English Coastal Path and associated margin of land • High standards of accessible green infrastructure design exemplified by eco-towns integrated into mainstream planning • Importance of access to nature recognised at the highest political level
<p>5. To raise and retain the UK's commitment to wildlife protection, animal welfare and respect for animals</p>	<p>Implementation of existing legislation &/or policy</p> <p>High level political profile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures to tackle disease in wildlife and farmed animal populations are legal and sustainable, and based on sound science and high animal welfare standards. • Wildlife protection and high animal welfare standards promoted across national Government and by the Government internationally

Table 3: Summary table of key quantitative performance indicators of annual progress towards meeting Link Secretariat strategic objective to 2015

Strategic objective	Key Performance Indicator	Annual Target
1. To improve the delivery of agreed collective messages from the environmental voluntary sector to those who can help us bring about the change we desire	Number (#) of Link hosted events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold 1 campaign related event (depending on phase of activity) Hold 1 AGM with associated guest speakers Hold 1 summer event e.g. Link 30th birthday reception in 2010
	# of externally hosted events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer opportunities for Link representatives to attend at least 30 meetings on Link's key policy priorities
	# of meetings with key decision makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer opportunities for Link members to attend at least 10 meetings with UK Ministers / EU Commissioners
	# and activity of Link groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide secretariat support to 7 (and no more than 10) working groups Provide support to each Link group to convene at least two meetings per year involving at least 4 of its members
2. 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	# of Link workshops / cross-working group activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer 3 skills exchange workshops as part of the Skill Share Programme Support 3 cross-working group meetings e.g. Chairs & Vice Chairs
	# of collective statements produced and level of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist production of at least 15 collective statements, e.g. position statements, press releases, joint letters etc. supported by a minimum of 5 members
	# of meetings/seminars with Joint Link partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist host nation to hold Devolution Seminar in Autumn 2010 Host or participate in at least 2 telephone conferences and 1 face-to-face meeting of the Joint Links (carbon budgets permitting)
	# and activity level of Link mailing lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 7 (and no more than 10) policy &/or campaigns related mailing lists Maintain 3 (and no more than 5) internal governance related mailing lists
	# and readership of Link Secretariat reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce 12 monthly e-bulletins with a readership of 35% Produce 4 quarterly reports with a readership of 40%
	Regularity of updates to Link website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain 3 (and no more than 5) mini campaign sites on Link website Post all collective statements within 3 days of production
3. To provide a safe forum for members to exchange information, and develop and promote action that could effect positive change.	Availability of Link internal documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide minutes of Link meetings to members within 4 weeks of the meeting Circulate responses to Link letters to members within 1 week of receipt
	Availability and quality of annual report and accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce and submit annual report & financial statements compliant with charity and company law within 3 months of year end
4. To maintain a high standard of service whilst developing the Secretariat's capacity to meet the needs of the membership	Attraction and retention of motivated &/or experienced staff & volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain 4 full time staff (rising to 5 if necessary to achieve Link's objectives) Offer volunteering opportunities to people with a keen interest in Link issues retaining a pool of at least 2 volunteers at any one time

4.3 Principles of design & implementation

The successful implementation of the Link Operational Strategy will be guided by the set of principles or ways of working that Link, as a Secretariat service and a coalition of members, routinely employ.

Equality – Regardless of size or length of membership each member has equal voting rights - ‘one member, one vote’ - and voice in Link’s direction.

Independence – An annual subscription fee and voluntary donations from members provide the majority of Link’s core funds.

Transparency – High reporting standards, record keeping and transparent decision-making processes, from the Management Committee through to sub-group level.

Empowerment – Representatives are empowered to advocate the collective views of the membership, who have the support of over 8 million people in the UK.

Positive Endorsement – Support must be declared for each collective statement – blanket support by members for Link statements is never assumed.

Solidarity – By putting difference aside and working in collaboration, members support each others views now which makes for stronger partnerships in the future.

Inclusivity – Sharing expertise and experience increases capacity of members and the sector and improves the ability to bring about positive change.

4.4 Geographic scope

The geographic scope of the Link Operational Strategy and Direction Statement is limited to the scope of the operations and activities of Wildlife and Countryside Link.

Link is based in London and focuses most of its efforts on influencing Westminster and Whitehall. There are other Links in each of the devolved administrations;

- Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)
- Scottish Environment Link (SEL)
- Wales Environment Link (WEL)

The four Link organisations in the UK are separately constituted and together the ‘Joint Links’ act as a liaison service to their memberships of NGOs in the four countries of the UK, working on environmental issues including wildlife, countryside, historic environment and public enjoyment. The Joint Links will continue to regularly exchange information and aim to meet face-to-face once a year to discuss priorities and best practice⁴.

With many environmental policies now devolved (including agriculture, land use planning, biodiversity action planning, environmental protection, site designation and in-shore fisheries) the four Link organisations liaise to make the most of opportunities for positive policy change in their own country, and also to ensure that NGOs in all four countries are aware of other experiences, best practice and progress across the UK on environmental issues.

⁴ We are grateful for funding from WWF that facilitates these meetings.

The Joint Links will continue to build on the outcomes of the biennial series of seminars on devolution, hosted in rotation by one of the Links. These events give all our members an opportunity to share intelligence about the developing political cultures in the four countries and the impact of devolution on the environmental agenda and eNGOs.

In 2010 to 2012, the Joint Links mechanism will continue to provide a useful means to add value both to the work of the individual Link organisations and to the collective work of Link across a range of working groups.

4.5 Financial plan

Link will seek to ensure that sufficient revenue is raised each year of the next three years to allow for implementation of the Strategy and associated work plans. Over the life of the Strategy, Link will seek to secure approximately 70% of its core income from its members, 20% from Natural England and 10% from Charitable Trusts.

At the time of going to press, Link was preparing a collective bid with its Sister Links to the consortium of Charitable Trusts that currently fund Link's marine work⁵. The Joint Links are requesting a further three year grant to retain capacity across the eNGO sector to work on marine issues. As part of this bid, Link has requested funds for its post of Marine Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator. The full cost recovery mechanism will, if the bid is successful, bring in sufficient funds to cover the post and project costs plus approximately 10% of Link's core costs until May 2013.

Link is also working with Natural England to secure a three year partnership agreement that it hopes will provide 20% of Link's core costs until December 2012.

Should either of these substantial bids be unsuccessful or any of these funders are unable to honour their commitments (as might be the case with a severely curtailed NE budget), Link would first use a proportion of its healthy reserves to maintain service at the current levels in the short term. In the medium term, Link has identified a number of possible donors from outside the membership that it would seek to approach before looking to its members for further financial support.

As noted in Section 3.3.2, additional income will be required should Link wish to expand operations beyond the current level within the next three years or retain operations at the current level beyond 2012.

4.6 Risk analysis

Broadly, there are three main categories of risk associated with the success or failure of the Link's Organisational Strategy 2010-2012, those associated with;

- funding the Strategy
- supporting the Strategy, and
- delivery the Strategy

Table 4 shows risks and proposed action (by Link) to mitigate those risks, and has been developed from an abridged version of Link's current Risk Register. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to allocate probability of occurrence but to serve as a focus of attention to identify possible problems that would affect Link's ability to fulfil its charitable Objects or its collective Strategy.

⁵ The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust.

Table 4. Risks to fully implementing the Strategy and proposed mitigation action (by Link)

Risk	Action to reduce risk
<p>Funding the Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of core funds from members • Loss of core funds from external funders • Lack of adequate projects funds 	<p>Maintain Link resources, i.e. staff and assets, at a level commensurate with the capacity of the membership to secure 51-80% of core funds, and projects funds when required</p> <p>Secure 3 year Memorandum of Understanding with Natural England for 20% of core funds</p> <p>Secure 3 year grant from Charitable Trusts for 25% of core funds or one project post</p> <p>Formulate and implement a fundraising strategy to maintain non-member income to core funds and projects</p>
<p>Supporting the Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link staff overstretched leading to lack of regular support of Link activities • Link IT and assets inadequate for management and information exchange tasks • Loss of key staff leading to reduction in capacity of the Secretariat • Loss of Trustees leading to reduction in governance of Link 	<p>Assist the formulation and implementation of SMART workplans</p> <p>Regularly review IT capital items, software and staff training</p> <p>Regularly review personnel policies and staff training opportunities</p> <p>Maintain volunteer policy to help provide short to medium-term support without job substitution</p> <p>Ensure Trustees are inducted and supported by Director and staff</p>
<p>Delivering the Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissatisfaction with Link priorities leading to loss of engagement • Failure to deliver work plan actions leading to failure to meet Strategic Objectives • Misrepresentation of Link Strategy leading to negative impacts to Link's reputation 	<p>Monitor and review Link strategy every three years with annual assessment by members to ensure Link remains relevant to its members and those it seeks to influence</p> <p>Ensure Trustees and Chairs of working groups are regularly provided with feedback from members via Link working group secretaries and Director</p> <p>Formulate and implement an advocacy plan to tell Link members what the Strategy is and what their role in it is</p>

Appendix 1: The consultation process

Key to the consultation has been Link's ability to involve and listen to its 37 member organisations and the 250+ individuals who regularly engage in Link activities. Link's Director devised a three stage process which the membership was invited to input to, starting with the Policy Directors in May and finishing with the presentation of the strategy at Link's AGM in December. There were three main stages to the process – consultation, validation and presentation – which were undertaken over the seven month period.

Consultation

- May – Group consultation with Policy Directors (PD)
- June – Group consultation with Chairs & Vice Chairs
- July – Individual consultation through online survey
- August – Interviews with selected members

Validation

- September – Draft strategy presented to Management Committee
- October – Group validation of results with PDs
- October – Draft strategy circulated to membership for comment
- November – Draft strategy shared with selected external stakeholders

Presentation

- November – Final strategy signed off by Management Committee
- December – Final strategy presented at AGM for endorsement
- January 2010 – Advocate strategy to external audiences

The design of the review process took into account that membership liaison has, in recent years, moved away from being solely Working Group and Task Force based, and has become more 'layered' in order to facilitate a cross-cutting mechanism at a more senior level to help identify opportunities for collective working on overarching aspects of environmental policy. Group participatory events were therefore conducted with the Policy Directors of member organisations as well as convening the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Link's Working Groups and Task Forces. Individuals were surveyed through a short online questionnaire and through interviews with Link's Director and Chair.

As a member-led organisation based on a model of service provision, Link's primary consultee is its membership as organisations, individuals and Link representatives. It was important to ask the right questions of the right people. It was also important that the process drew upon the insights of the Director and Secretariat as service deliverers and Link's Trustees as governors of the organisation.

Member organisations are the source of ideas and providers of resources (both human and financial). They brought their own strategic views to bear on whether the direction that Link was currently taking would bring the coalition to where it needs to be in order to achieve positive change. Their input helped Link understand where best to focus its collective energies and add value to the work of its individual members.

During the Forward Planning process 16 member organisations engaged through the Policy Director forum, 33 took part in the online survey, and meetings were held with 10 member organisations on aspects of the Strategy as it was being formulated. In total, 35 out of 38 members input during the process, a coverage of 92%.

Appendix 2: SWOT analysis & horizon scan

INTERNAL	
<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well organised coalition of diverse membership • Member-led agenda • Member funded: members provide the majority of Link's core funds • Well established ways of working in Secretariat and with and across members • Link responsive to members needs: membership fees, different types of membership • Track record of influencing decision makers • Well regarded in Government circles • Established staff body whose members are developing in their roles • Increased attractiveness of Link's work to funders 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low profile in public arena • Some larger members less engaged in developing areas of Link work and unsupportive of some Link activities, e.g. scoping LSC work • Link's ties to / work with groupings such as the Green Alliance, EEB and others can be strengthened • Uncertainty over future of established Link campaigns i.e. <i>Blueprint for Water</i> • Uncertainty over future capacity (through any loss of Marine funding) • Dependence on members susceptible to members' capacity and resource constraints and own organisation's strategic direction • Staff and members' familiarity with established ways of working may prevent change • Small staff body susceptible to 'downtime' through prolonged absence or loss of staff • Staff capacity to support breadth of work and new types of working
EXTERNAL	
<p><u>Opportunities</u> <i>Policy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment issues now well established in media and public discourse and on the political agenda - need to maintain this interest • NE's State of the Natural Environment and the EAC's Halting biodiversity loss reports - building on the momentum from the publication of these reports • NE's Vision for 2060 by 2020 Promotion of Link's landscape scale conservation (LSC) project - taking forward this agenda where there currently appear to be gaps • Environment is an apparent issue for Conservative Party leadership (but rest of party?) • Implications of Climate Act for biodiversity and for delivery bodies • Build on expected success of Marine & Coastal Access Bill; implementation of which to be right and timely • Reality of planning reforms start to be felt by people and politicians • Outcomes of CBD COP? 	<p><u>Threats</u> <i>Policy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominance of economic agenda over sustainable development as with SNR and planning reform • Key parts of Link's agenda now rest with Whitehall beyond Defra, e.g. BIS, CLG, DECC, HMT • Climate so much on the agenda that it can over-shadow the rest of Link's agenda (?); climate dominant + becoming its own silo • International whaling conventions weakened; UK playing a lesser role in maintaining safeguards • EU Directives being watered down by new centre right Euro Parliament / Council of Ministers • JNCC aids monitoring / stats to support Marine work; otherwise not providing opportunities to influence our agenda <p><u>General</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra / NE low profile in Government circles / funding prevents environment being higher on HMG agenda

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Directives coming into force • Credit crunch fall out has prompted debate about the right role for regulation • Quality of life and well being agenda <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High public appetite for environmental concern despite economic downturn • Economic downturn has strong environmental origins (oil, food prices) • Change in Government signals change in policies (also a threat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment 'lost' in run up to General Election; post election doubt for statutory agencies; recession + post election uncertainty for financial squeeze • Link / members could become distracted by structural reforms + reinventing policy for new HMG • Lack of funding available for the sector to successfully deliver the agenda (impacts on members and their ability to engage in breadth of Link work) • Limited access to an incoming Conservative Government • Ensuring compliance with Charity Commission rules • Getting right people involved at right time for Int'l work e.g. COP15
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Horizon Scan

General Election

This will happen by May 2010 and will dominate national politics and media attention. Depending on public faith in politics it could still be a close affair, possibly leading to a hung Parliament. A large number of MPs are due to step down at the next election including 40+ Labour MPs, many with strong welfare, conservation and environmental knowledge and records. **The economy is set to dictate the agenda.** Voter interest in 'the environment' will be obscured but will not disappear altogether and may offer up opportunities. Labour Party leadership issues continue; Conservative Party policy will emerge. Overall, it is an **uncertain period for policy influence**, campaigning and public reactions / **antipathy toward politics**, politicians and rule makers especially since the 2009 MP expenses scandal.

The national and global economy

This will continue to dominate political discourse and space for other issues will be squeezed. Public concerns change as uncertainty and unemployment rise and this may lead to a large rise in **volunteering as well as some societal unrest** (crime, protest). This also makes for an uncertain period for policy influence and campaigning as above.

The Government will have less money to **spend and taxes** may start to be used as a revenue raiser, for example on fuel use. This will influence the way the public views environmental measures in general and reinforce 'green' measures as costly and irrelevant to real concerns here and now. The Conservative Party (and Taxpayers' Alliance) target public spending to balance the cuts in private sector. The Institute of Fiscal Studies claims Britain is bust and public spending is exhausted until 2020. If this is true, opportunities exist to spend better and in new ways in order to retain societal 'goods'. There is a danger environmental spending could be seen as a soft target in preference to spending on health and education.

Lack of money in people's pockets not only affects the way people feel but may lead to **shortcuts in services and protection standards** e.g. food safety, environmental health and a surge in demand for low cost products of dubious environmental quality.

Charities

Recession reduces donations and trust giving and funding sources reappraise their priorities and capabilities fuelled by continued uncertainty over the duration and depth of recession.

Funders will be looking for even more value for money and some will require a greater say in the direction of the causes they assist. **EU funding** offers some opportunities for statutory funding, such as the Life+ and DG Environment budget lines, especially for research and development funding and collaboration with research and educational institutions. Many charities will see increased demands for their service at a time of uncertain income.

The Obama effect

This will give a lead to what other political leaders do in their backyards. Talk about '**Green New Deals**' may turn into real action. Equally Keynesian stimulus responses may include environmental 'bads' such as road building and airport expansion. Recession also provides an excuse to **de-regulate and water down protections** and gains made to date. An enlightened China and strong environmental policy in the USA may help moderate or overcome this. Obama may not meet expectations.

Climate change

This will continue as the 'main environmental issue' post December 2009's **COP15** of the UNFCCC in Copenhagen. Hooking on to climate as an issue may open or close doors for other issues such as food quality, biodiversity, conservation, transport and trade. How to show that biodiversity and climate as flip sides of the same coin? The decision to consent to Heathrow Runway 3 sends conflicting signals to the public which grows more disillusioned with and / or confused about political action and promises; Ed Miliband's decision on carbon capture for new coal fired plants sends better signals. Some may point to the Government's apparent double standards to justify following suit at home, at work and in their personal lives. Equally, lack of action may stimulate a rise in direct action which may challenge the broader environment movement.

In Europe and internationally

A new **European Parliament** with new MEPs was elected in 2009 with a larger far right and Euro-sceptic element. A new Commission will develop a new 5 year programme and will come under pressure from lobbying anti-regulation interests. Debates and negotiations will begin on the next European Union budget and on further reforms to the CAP in 2013. Post Copenhagen, the Commission will implement climate action if the talks succeed. Reviews are due of the Lisbon agreement and policies such as Natural Resources. 2010 has been designated as **International Year of Biodiversity** – to be launched in Paris, January 2010 with various reports and declarations due over the year leading up to the major talks in Japan during October 2010.

UK delivery on environment agenda

Pressure to lift the **moratorium on commercial whaling** will continue with pro-whaling nations deal-making attempts to open up coastal whaling and weaken conservation measures. Recession signals a rise in trade in endangered flora and fauna, and animal welfare cases bring added pressure on charity sector to provide a safety net.

The UK's review of **set aside in agriculture** has opted for a voluntary approach which will have to be monitored for its efficacy in securing conservation gains from the set aside period. Concern that the Government's resistance to regulate further to underpin and support mandatory environmental delivery.

The UK will miss both its Millennium Development Goal target to **halt biodiversity loss** by 2010 and its Kyoto climate change undertakings. The 2009 review of the NERC Act's biodiversity duty may lead to an improved duty and/or reappraisal of the role of Natural England as the Government's biodiversity watchdog. There is growing concern over the ability of environment statutory bodies to fulfil their duties because of direction of Ministers, coming under pressure to enable development and / or the lack of resources to meet

demands on their service. Public Service Agreements (PSAs) expire in March 2011 and start to be negotiated in 2010 as part of the next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).

By December 2009 action to implement the **Water Framework Directive** should have led to setting up of measures in each river basin district to deliver environmental objectives (article 11 of the Directive); and, publication of river basin management plans for each river basin district, including environmental objectives for each body of surface or groundwater and summaries of programmes of measures (article 13)⁶. The draft **Floods and Water Management Bill** introduced to Parliament, may acquire a sense of urgency similar to the political concern expressed during the extensive flooding of 2007 but is just as likely to run out of Parliamentary time with no prospect of a Conservative Government treating it as a priority.

There may be a counter reaction to the implementation of the **Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations 2008** which came into force on 1 March 2009 for England only and which covers damage to protected species and natural habitats or in a SSSI, damage to water, and land damage.

During 2010 larger local authorities, public sector organisations and businesses (5,000 in total) are required to join the compulsory **Carbon Reduction Commitment**, an emissions trading scheme based on electricity use⁷. Also in 2010, the Government will review **England recycling targets** for 2015 and 2020.

The Department for Transport starts to go green with its **Carbon Reduction Strategy**. This is due in late 2009 and will set out how the DfT will contribute to meeting climate change targets including its overall carbon target, an acceptance of the need for behaviour change and use of improved technology and prioritised funding for low carbon transport. DfT guidance on Local Transport Plans (LTPs) reflects this growing climate awareness and LTPs will be submitted by transport authorities in summer 2010 covering 2011-2016 and will indicate how ambitious both local authorities and central government is about cutting carbon emissions through transport planning and funding. Key to this will also be the DfT guidance, due summer 2010, on **Delivering a Sustainable Transport System** (DaSTS).

English regional governance

Boundary Committee for England changes likely to be completed during 2011⁸. Local and regional decision-making tiers are handed greater economic duties and are required to facilitate economic development. The **economic agenda** holds sway over other considerations. **City regions** emerge as new economic powerhouses and drivers of local and regional decision making especially on economic development, land use and infrastructure. **Economic Improvement Boards** introduced under the **Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act** come into force as part of cross boundary cooperation between local authorities to boost economic growth. Regional Select Committees of MPs will report on their first scrutiny, during 2009, of regions' progress toward becoming sustainable, low carbon economies.

If Labour wins the next election there will be:

- Continuation of regional decision making by RDAs and Leaders Boards
- Further consolidation of local authority structures; more unitary authorities
- Greater role for local government in meeting public expectation of quality public and other local services and in delivering on climate change

⁶ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ENVIRONMENT/water/wfd/pdf/wfdtimetable.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/business/crc/index.htm>

⁸ <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/boundary-reviews>

If the Conservatives win the next election likely changes include:

- Removal of RDAs and regional planning functions (although this seems to be softening)
- Empowerment of local councils perhaps retaining newly formed Leaders' Boards
- More elected executive mayors
- Restoration of County Councils; repeal creation of recent unitary authorities.
- Abolition of the Infrastructure Planning Commission

At the end of 2009 the Audit Commission will report on its first round of **Comprehensive Area Assessments** (CAAs) of local authority services including the basket of 35 locally agreed and National Indicators. CAAs will feed into the review of local authority / local strategic partnerships' **Local Area Agreements** (LAAs) in 2011.

Planning

National Policy Statements (NPSs) and the role of an **Infrastructure Planning Commission** (IPC) free from Parliamentary scrutiny are likely to lead to fast track approvals for potentially carbon-intensive infrastructure; Stansted runway 2 decision due in 2011; Gatwick runway 2 options evaluated in 2011. Public reaction to infrastructure will have early influence of a new Parliament, political class and whether the economy recovers in a low carbon, biodiversity benign way. The Conservatives intend to scrap planning reforms the IPC (good in some ways) but in doing so fail to grasp planning and sustainable development as enshrined in law.

Media

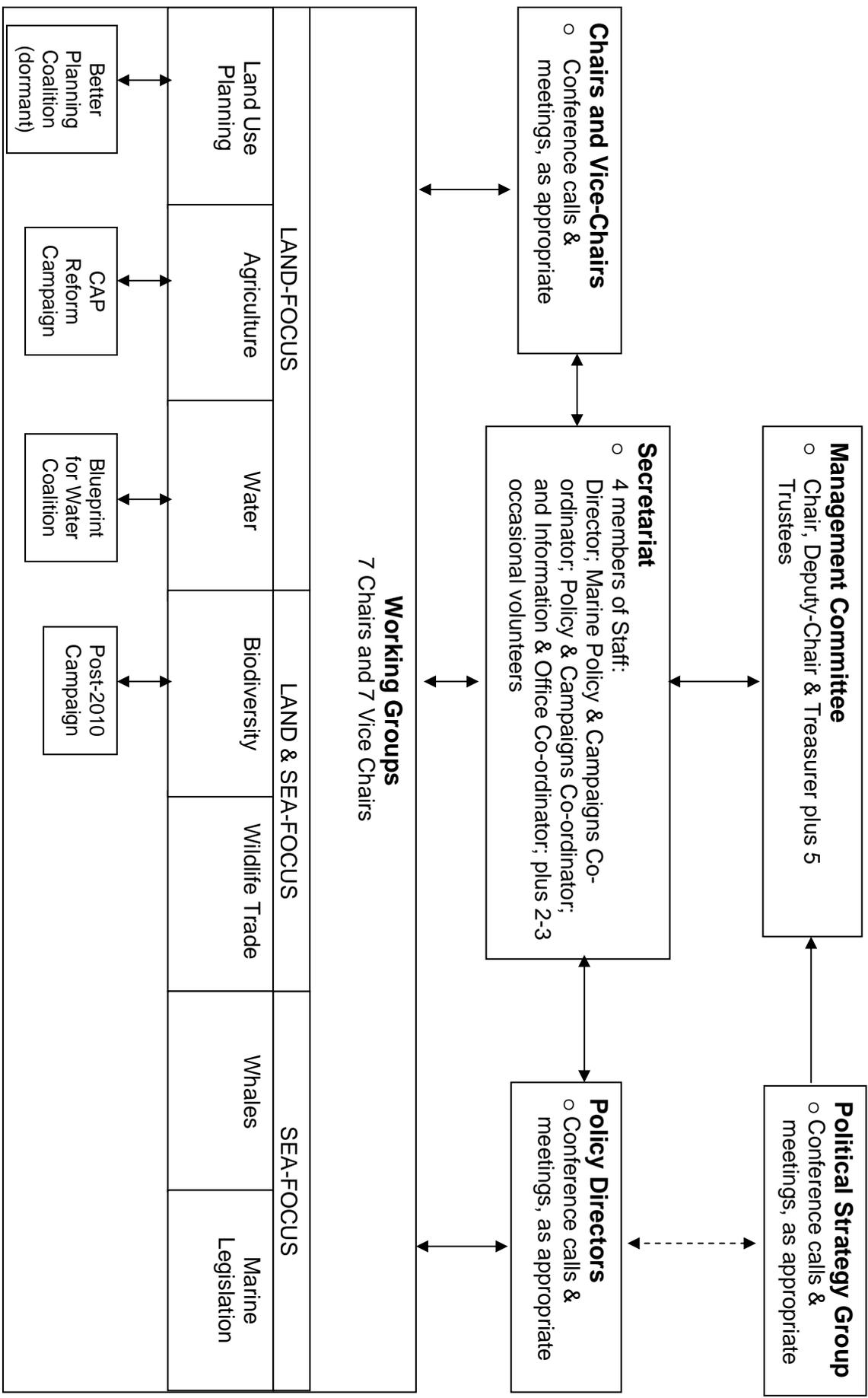
Media outlets contract and splinter with ever more specialisation. The potential rises for a media backlash such as attacks on **the cost of going green**, the role of campaigners or **the role of charities**. Media interest will remain in both positive and negative stories (if only to create variation from the recession and election stories). News interest in a **new generation of activists** will rise but may not be positive. Direct action will create debate and may be seen a distraction from 'real issues'.

Link's work within Joint Links

At the October 2008 Joint Links Devolution Seminar in Birmingham the following areas were also advanced as worthy of further exploration and co-operation:

- The role of Government and the third sector in the implementation of animal welfare/nature conservation policy;
- Biodiversity as an area where a greater shared UK perspective would help and the Joint Links mechanism enables organisations to come together and work at the UK level by bringing together differing agendas and allowing difference to be aired in a safe forum;
- Link to provide a safe forum for discussions on a) the post climate change act delivery agenda and expectation/capacity of the NGO community especially from different government levels and b) how biodiversity and climate are linked and how concerns around related topics such as renewable energy developments are ironed out to ensure NGO unity;
- How to appeal to and harness the self interest implicit in devolved administrations to deliver our objectives;
- The importance of following through on the implementation of policy (i.e. not just hoping that good laws are then enacted) and the aggregate contributions up to the UK level;
- Knowledge transfer for rapid learning to allow nations that are "behind" to catch up to the UK baseline;
- Decide on / find our 'biggest stick' and how to use it; what will be effective in the next 2-3 years and, related to this, understanding how best to work with and at European level and better use relations with other NGOs, such as EEB and;
- How to ensure that the whole of Government is involved in our agenda and not just environment departments which are often marginalised within decision making.

Appendix 3: Link Organisation Chart



Appendix 4: Biodiversity Campaign Proposal

2010		2011		2012	
Planning for launch of campaign	Lobbying for post-2010 target	Influencing new Govt/ campaigning	Campaign advocacy	Lobbying new Govt/ campaigning	Reviewing campaign to date

Link believes that engaging with the various biodiversity processes over many years has not had the desired effect. Biodiversity is still in decline, the Government will miss its target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 without regret and biodiversity is not considered important on the political agenda. The 2010 target will be revised at the end of 2010 and the next target needs to be taken seriously by Government if it is to succeed. The Biodiversity Working Group will lead a campaign to give biodiversity a political boost, to get politicians to understand the importance and relevance of biodiversity and how it should be integrated into all other environmental issues.

2010

During 2010, the biodiversity group will prepare and plan for the launch of their campaign to give biodiversity a political boost, including devising an advocacy strategy. With a general election around May 2010, the group seeks to influence the new Government before and after through debates around new policy initiatives such as the Conservative Party's conservation credits proposal. In October 2010, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10) will take place and a post 2010 international biodiversity target will be agreed. The adoption of global post 2010 targets will take place in December. The campaign will work on influencing the target development throughout 2010 and will highlight its importance, relevance and value to a new Government.

2011

During 2011 (with a new Government in place), Link will continue to campaign to push biodiversity up the political agenda. The group will also lobby Defra and other Government departments to develop a robust plan for the delivery of a post 2010 target focusing on immediate fixes (e.g. better use of protected sites, biodiversity duty) and sustainable solutions (e.g. regional landscape projects, connectivity across the countryside). Link activities will include media and communications work, policy development, such as developing coalition position statements, and advocacy work such as meetings with Parliamentarians and key civil servants.

2012

The campaign will continue to lobby the Government. Link will undertake a review of the steps taken by Government towards delivering the post 2010 target to improve biodiversity and the natural environment. It will also seek commitment to the next steps the Government will be taking and wish to see a phased approach to boosting biodiversity during the new Government's term, 3 – 5 years.

Appendix 5: CAP Reform Campaign Proposal

2010		2011		2012	
Advocacy of Beyond the Pillars	Drafting BtP II	Launch BtP II	Advocacy of BtP II	Lobbying	Lobbying (re EU budget)

Since the launch of Link's *Beyond the Pillars* (2008), which set out the Link's policy perspective on the future of the CAP, the Farming and Rural Development (FRD) Group has concentrated on the CAP Health Check and the technical details that emerged from this process. The annual workplan became too broad for the group to realistically deliver, with the majority of members using the group as an information source rather than as a vehicle to effect change.

It was proposed that Link streamlines its agricultural policy work and the group agreed to develop a campaign focused on the forthcoming round of CAP reforms taking place from 2010 to 2013. The reform process will run concurrently with the EU Budget Review, which will set out the framework and finances to be spent on the EU's key policy priorities up until 2020.

The outcomes of the budget review process are likely to have major implications for the amount of funding spent on providing support for farming and rural development, and consequently on funding allocated to agri-environment measures.

2010

During 2010, the group will continue to advocate the policy perspective of *Beyond the Pillars* and will produce a companion briefing document. Activities will include disseminating Link policy documents to the new intake of MEPs, new European Commissioners and to the UK Government, including Defra, the Treasury and new MPs and Ministers following the general election. Link will meet with the new Government to put forward Link objectives for the reform of the CAP and a position statement on the EU Budget will be produced and advocated.

By year end, the group will have drafted a follow up to the 2008 publication - *'Beyond the Pillars II'* - to coincide with the European Commission 'White Paper'/discussion document on CAP to help to inform the design of new land management measures required to deliver UK and EU policy objectives. The group will hold meetings with their counterparts across the Joint Links to discuss opportunities for joint working and will liaise with EEB where appropriate.

2011

During 2011 the group will finalise, produce and launch by event *Beyond the Pillars II* to align with the CAP reform proposals expected from European Commission. The document will be disseminated to a broad range of policy makers; it will be used to influence the UK Government's CAP reform negotiations as well as being presented to select European Commissioners and MEPs.

2012

During 2012 the campaign will continue its lobbying work around the final draft proposals for reform of the CAP and the EU Budget. The group will continue to lead the campaign, continuing to lobby key decision makers during the latter half of 2012 in the last stages of negotiations on new EU Budget and CAP reform before the decision in 2013.

Appendix 6: Blueprint for Water coalition

The Blueprint for Water is a unique coalition of environmental, water efficiency, and fishing and angling organisations. The coalition came together in November 2006 to set out an ambitious but realistic agenda for action across a range of water and wetland issues. The 10 steps to sustainable water use have a clear focus on delivering sustainable water environment against the backdrop of Water Framework Directive (WFD) implementation.

Three years on, the Blueprint agenda remains as relevant as ever - the water environment is still in crisis. Government must remain committed to meet the ecological objectives of the WFD to protect water bodies vital to people's health, happiness and our wildlife.

The Blueprint coalition continues to be a successful partnership of organisations that have not traditionally worked together. The breadth of interests it covers makes it difficult to dismiss 'the 10 steps' as a fringe interest. The eye-catching and powerful design of the Blueprint publications have created a brand that is recognised by parliamentarians, the water industry, Government, and its agencies, and the Blueprint has rapidly become the first port of call when a view from the environmental sector on water policy is sought. Representatives input to the Pitt Review into 2007 floods and the Water Protection Zone stakeholder group and the group has made responses to the draft Flood and Water Management Bill, the River Basin Management Plans and the Walker Review.

Key successes

The Blueprint has secured proposals to ban phosphates in domestic detergents, to introduce greater powers to regulate diffuse agricultural pollution and to give new powers to undertake morphological restoration of rivers, lakes and coasts. The forthcoming Flood and Water Management Bill will give the Environment Agency the powers the Blueprint has called for so it can better protect the water environment. Once enacted, the Bill will deliver the Blueprint proposals to amend the automatic right of connection to sewers and to create a framework for ownership, maintenance and adoption of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). The Blueprint has also helped secure an increase in investment by water companies in catchment schemes to protect drinking water quality at source.

Since 2006, progress on the 10 steps has been made but there is still a long way to go. In 2009, the Blueprint succeeded in gaining a commitment from the Minister for Water to raise the level of ambition on the river basin management plans (RBMPs). However, the draft plans show that there is still much to be done to turn the 10 steps set out in the Blueprint into action.

2010-2012

Over the next three years the coalition will seek to improve RBMPs, to call for primary and secondary legislation for the Flood and Water Management Bill, and will monitor progress on commitments by water companies to invest in the water environment. In the immediate term and around the general election, the Blueprint will work to understand and influence the policies of all political parties through the lens of the Blueprint's 10 Key Steps to sustainable water management.

The main aim of the Blueprint for Water coalition over the period of the Operational Strategy 2010-2012 will be to continue to be visible and recognised by decision makers as the voice for successful sustainable water policy.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AES	Agri-environment scheme
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BtP	Beyond the Pillars (I & II)
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
COP	Conference of Parties
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change
DG	Directorate General
DfT	Department for Transport
EA	Environment Agency
EAC	Environmental Audit Committee
EEB	European Environment Bureau
EU	European Union
F&WM Act	Floods and Water Management Act
GAEC	Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury
IPC	Infrastructure Planning Commission
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IWC	International Whaling Commission
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAA	Local Area Agreements
LDED Act	Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act
M&CA Act	Marine and Coastal Access Act
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NE	Natural England
NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Ofwat	Water Services Regulation Authority
PoM	Principles of Management
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
PSA	Public Service Agreement
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
RPI	Retail Price Index
SMART	Specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic and time-bound (plans)
SNR	Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (analysis)
TB	Tuberculosis
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework on Climate Change
WFD	Water Framework Directive

Wildlife and Countryside Link
89 Albert Embankment
London
SE1 7TP

T: 020 7820 8600
F: 020 7820 8620
E: enquiry@wcl.org.uk
W: www.wcl.org.uk

A company limited by guarantee in England & Wales
Company No. 3889519
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