

## E-bulletin August 2015

Welcome to Link's August 2015 e-bulletin. See below for this month's top stories and updates from each of our working groups. If you would like to subscribe to our e-bulletin or submit news items, please contact [Emma](#).



### Visions for Water Management and Agriculture

On 15 September Link will be holding an influential parliamentary reception. At a time when urgent action is needed to reverse the declines in our natural environment, Link members have come together to produce ambitious visions for farming and for water in England.

The visions are set out in two publications - ***Farming fit for the Future*** and ***Blueprint for Water***. The Secretary of State for the Environment, the Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, will deliver a keynote speech and the event will be hosted by Zac Goldsmith MP.

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### Communications

After going through a tendering process, Link has commissioned digital agency Studio Republic to build and design a new website. Studio Republic's proposal responded well to a recent survey of members' views, which demonstrated that members want a new website that looks visually appealing, contains readily-accessible information and has a strong campaigning voice. While survey respondents thought the language used on the current website is 'moderately easy to very easy' for Link members and Government to understand (98%), this dropped to 56% for a media audience and 40% for a public audience. Work will take place over the next three months and we hope to launch the new site before the end of the year.

Working with colleagues from member organisations, we have produced a communications plan for the forthcoming Parliamentary launch of our Water Matters and Farming fit for Future publications. As a part of this plan, we have issued a press release, sourced case studies for media opportunities and engaged with stakeholders including farmers and water companies.

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### Link Staff Updates

Next month Link will be saying farewell to Morwenna McKenzie, Link's Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator. Morwenna will be beginning a PhD at Coventry University, we wish her all the best in her new position.

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## Agriculture Working Group meeting

The Agriculture Working group will next meet on 2 September. The group will discuss updates on Common Agricultural Policy and the Rural Development Programme for England with the main focus on advocacy planning beyond the launch of the publication; Farming Fit for the Future.



## Further evidence submission to the European Commission

Throughout May and June, the European Commission held 'mission' meetings with 10 member states to discuss the member states' evidence submissions. On 1 June, ten delegates from the Joint Links REFIT group attended the UK NGO mission meeting with the Commission and the consultants carrying out the REFIT review. The group subsequently agreed to submit additional evidence to the review process, highlighting key elements of Link's previous response and addressing additional issues raised in the mission meeting.

The further evidence was supported by [100 NGOs](#) from across the Joint Links network and is set out in the following six papers below;

- Review of progress made against the UK Government's recommendations for improved implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives
- Why it makes sense not to merge the Birds and Habitats Directives
- The "ecosystem services" approach to the Nature Directives
- Responding to the European Environment Agency's State of the Environment Report 2015
- What would have happened to wildlife without the Nature Directives?
- The Birds and Habitats Directives and Climate Change

To read these documents, please visit the [Joint Links REFIT Task and Finish Group page](#) on the Link website.

## Task and Finish Group meetings

The group held a meeting on 7 August to discuss next steps following completion of the latest consultation phase. The group will next meet on 3 September.



## MoJ Consultation on Reform of Judicial Review

The Ministry of Justice is currently consulting on a further reform to JR as a result of provisions in the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (deadline 15 September 2015). Part 4 of the Act introduced new provisions relating to the provision and use of financial information in JR proceedings. These proposals will affect environmental cases and were strongly resisted by the Legal Strategy Group. The group is preparing a response to the consultation, which will be available for comment and sign on in early September.



## Land Use Planning Working Group Meeting

The Land Use planning Group secured a meeting with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 17 August, meeting with Deputy Director Peter Ellis and his colleagues to discuss key planning elements of the Productivity Plan. The meeting provided an interesting insight into some of the thinking behind the plan and its relationship with house building and plan making. DCLG are looking for good and bad examples of how Local Planning Authorities have engaged with Link members in the plan making process. Please contact [Victoria](#) to contribute examples which can be used to influence the upcoming Housing Bill.



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## Thames Water - Water Efficiency Project

The Blueprint for Water coalition met with Thames Water on 29 July to outline the Blueprint's recent activities and our plans for the future. The Thames Water was particularly interested

to learn how the coalition works and to identify opportunities for future collaboration such as sharing and disseminating information.

### **Meeting with the Environment Agency**

Blueprint for Water met with Sarah Chare, (Deputy Director of Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology), at the Environment Agency and her team on 6 August. Sarah outlined the Agency's priorities for next year to protect and enhance our environment, and the role of her specific team, which essentially provides advice and expertise around the potential impacts floods, droughts and climate change may have on river morphology. Meeting attendees also visited a restored chalk stream near Newbury which the area geomorphologist had helped to protect and recover.

### **Blueprint for Water Working Group meeting**

The Group met on 19 August to discuss issues such as Defra's [drought](#) consultation and Ofwat's [resilience](#) consultation, as well as the Group's work for the coming months. The main topic of discussion was the forthcoming launch of the new Blueprint for Water publication on the 15 September at the House of Commons, in conjunction with the Agriculture Working Group's vision for farming.

### **Advocacy plans for the summer – take your MP out**

The second phase of '[Save Our Waters' campaign](#) is now underway. Between October 2014 and April 2015, local groups and individuals were encouraged to respond to the River Basin Management Plans consultation by using a questionnaire to contribute their views on the content of the final plans. The plans should help ensure that our water bodies have a chance to recover and can be enjoyed by people and nature for generations to come.

Now, the campaign asks local groups and individuals to contact their MP, raising awareness about the health of their local rivers, as well outlining as the measures required to improve and maintain high standards of water quality. This [advocacy pack](#), has been shared amongst Link members and campaign supporters to continue their political engagement with the Government from now until October.



### **Whales Working Group meeting**

Members of the Whales Group have been preparing for the next group meeting, in addition to a meeting with Nigel Gooding, Head of the Defra Team to the International Whaling Commission, to be held in early September. The group has also been closely monitoring whaling activities being carried out by Japan, Iceland, Norway and the Faroe Islands. Throughout August the group has liaised with Link's Wildlife Trade Group in order to develop timely strategies for the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which takes place in September 2016.



### **Trade Working Group meeting**

The Group met on the 27 August to discuss a wide range of issues, including the impact that Cecil the lion hunted in Zimbabwe has had in the media and their work on trophy hunting. The group also shared information on their organisations' work and forthcoming events, especially the Animals Committee and CITES Standing Committee meetings ahead of next year's Conference of the Parties in South Africa.



Wildlife and Countryside Link  
89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP  
W: [www.wcl.org.uk](http://www.wcl.org.uk)

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