

E-bulletin: December 2012

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



The ties that bind: Letter from Link's outgoing Chair

Link ends 2012 stronger than ever with more members, a solid sense of what binds us across the issues and more commitment to work together on the big themes.

Our membership gives Link unrivalled breadth and depth of expertise across the issues that make much of life worthwhile - even possible.

Since 2007 my aim has been to make Link function better for its members by addressing the real issues we face above and beyond the everyday policy detail.

As a result, there's greater sharing across Link's working groups and more ability to master the policy detail while grasping the bigger picture.

Link's Management Committee is more strategic in looking at the external world as well as managing the internal workings of Link as a company and charity. Our own 'links' to our members' CEOs, Policy Directors and policy officers have improved (I call it 'the zip') and Link staff are more proactive in proposing ideas and directions as well as being 'member led' and responsive to members' needs.

All of this helps us make best use of members' time. The Government gets a better deal too as it gets better help in making good decisions. Ministers and civil servants know what's needed and have plenty of viable ways of 'doing the right thing' because we show and tell them every week and month in a consistent, supportive and firm way.

Accusations that we sometimes indulge in 'megaphone diplomacy' or 'see the glass half empty' forget that it's our job to speak truth to power when good governance, scientific urgency and social, economic and environmental responsibility fall short.

Thank you for helping me in my role. I am very pleased to now hand on to Victoria Chester and her new Link Management Committee to take Link into perhaps its most vital years. Let's give them, Elaine King and her great team all our support.

Paul de Zylva
Chair, 2007-2012

Annual General Meeting

This year Link held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 5 December at the Campaign to Protect Rural England offices in London. In addition to AGM official business, members discussed Link's 2012 strategic review and Paul de Zylva presented the Chair's annual review, reflecting on developments over the past year. The AGM was followed by a lively debate, chaired by Gareth Morgan (RSPB), on valuing the natural environment and the concept of biodiversity offsetting. Speakers were: Professor Dieter Helm, Chairman of the Natural Capital Committee; Cara Reece, Programme Manager at the Environment Bank and Dr Paul Anderson, philosopher, lawyer and ecologist. Link would like to thank all our speakers as well as the Campaign to Protect Rural England for hosting us.

Link election of Trustees

We are delighted to announce that, following an election at the AGM, we have four new members of the Management Committee: Amy Coyte (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust); Helen Meech (National Trust); Paul Miner (Campaign to Protect Rural England) and Hazel Norman (British Ecological Society). Victoria Chester (Plantlife) was elected as Link's new Chair and David Lind (RSPCA) was re-elected as Link's Treasurer. Jeremy Biggs (Pond Conservation) will serve as Vice Chair and Sue Armstrong-Brown (RSPB) will enter her second year as a Link Trustee.

Paul de Zylva (Friends of the Earth) and David Bullock (National Trust) have now stepped down from Link's Management Committee. We would like to say a huge thank you to both Paul and David for all their hard work and support during their six years on the Management Committee.

We would also like to thank the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Link's Working Groups and Task Forces for all their work throughout 2012 and welcome those newly appointed for 2013.

Triennial Review

On 12 December, the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [announced the start of the Triennial Review](#) of the Environment Agency and Natural England. Link will be engaging with Defra throughout the process and will respond to the review by the 4 February 2013 deadline. On 10 December, Link met with Andrea Young and Jill Wordley, Director and Deputy Director of the Defra Triennial Review Team respectively, to discuss the launch of the review.

Law Commission review

Link has [responded to the Law Commission consultation on Wildlife Law](#), with sign on from 17 Link member organisations and the support of Wales Environment Link. This unified and constructive response provides answers to specific technical questions set out by the Law Commission. The Law Commission now has a two to three month period to consider all the responses and will then make recommendations to Defra.

MCZ Consultation

On 13 December the Government launched a [public consultation](#) on its proposals for the designation of Marine Conservation Zones in English inshore and English and Welsh offshore waters. Defra is

proposing that just 31 sites (out of the 127 recommended) are designated in 2013. However, Defra “expects to designate future tranches of sites” and those recommended sites “that are not being proposed for designation in the first tranche may be included in later tranches”. Reference Area site recommendations have not been considered for inclusion in the first tranche.

Regarding sites for mobile species, Defra is maintaining its position that by-catch mitigation measures, fisheries management and protected species licensing are more effective than spatial protection measures in conserving very widely dispersed and mobile species. However, the consultation also states that Defra will consider designating MCZs for highly mobile species “if there is clear evidence that the conservation of a highly mobile species would benefit from site-based protection measures”.

Link expects to submit a response to the consultation which runs until 31 March 2013. The consultation documents and further information can be found on [Defra’s website](#).

Food security paper

Link has produced a [position statement on Food Security](#), supported by 10 Link member organisations. The statement highlights that food must be produced in a way that protects and enhances the natural resources on which both its production and wildlife depend. The paper also explains that increased production does not automatically lead to less global hunger and, instead of focusing on production, global poverty and access to food must also be addressed. The statement outlines 10 key actions and interventions that would be necessary to deliver sustainable, sufficient and secure supplies of food. These actions include: suitable rewards for farmers for the provision of public goods; government policies that work to ensure food production is environmentally sustainable; measures to reduce food waste; and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy to create a European Sustainable Land Management Policy.

Growth and Infrastructure Bill

On 13 December Link [submitted a report](#) stage briefing on the Growth and Infrastructure Bill. As with the committee stage briefing, this briefing urges that any further reform of the planning regime must support the National Planning Policy Framework’s founding principle of sustainable development. The briefing also makes a series of recommendations including the removal of clauses 1, 7 and 13 and amendments to clauses 4, 12 and 21.

Joint Links update

For a quarterly update from our three sister Links [click here](#).

[Follow Link on Twitter](#) to keep up to date with our policy papers, consultation responses and events, as well as news relevant to our work.



Rural Development Programmes

Defra has started to work on developing plans for design of the next Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), which is due to start in 2014. Link is engaging with this process on various levels and is a recognised stakeholder on the Defra RDPE Executive stakeholder group, which is the primary stakeholder consultation forum for the RDPE. In addition to such formal engagement, Link members are feeding their thoughts on the next RDPE into Defra individually and Link will assist in the development of a collective position in early 2013.

European Commission position paper

On 6 December Link attended a presentation by the European Commission on a position paper which sets out the Commission's preliminary views on how the UK should spend funds under the Common Strategic Framework (CSF). To read the position paper [click here](#). Link members have also been attending 'roadshows' hosted by the Department of Business, Industry and Skills to engage with its proposals on how the CSF funds should be used for the 2014-2020 period.

Joint Links teleconference

On 4 December Link held a teleconference with its sister Links in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to share information and discuss Rural Development Programmes and CAP reform processes in England and the devolved countries.

Link position on uplands

A group of Link members met in late November to develop thinking on a Link position paper on the Uplands. This involved members from across the various interests within Link which relate to uplands (biodiversity, access and recreation, landscape, woodland). A draft paper will be produced in January and will be used to inform discussions with the Natural England Uplands Policy leads, scheduled for the end of that month.



People Engagement Group

Alex Hunt (National Trust) represented Link at a People Engagement Group meeting on 3 December. Discussions focussed on the Biodiversity Segmentation Scoping Study and Chris De Grouchy, the new Deputy Director for UK Biodiversity, gave a presentation on the Biodiversity Programme Board priorities for their next meeting.

Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

The Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG), part of the Governance structure for the delivery of [Biodiversity 2020](#), held a meeting on 5 December primarily to discuss the TBG implementation plan and TBG risk register. Nicola Hutchinson, (Plantlife) attended the meeting on behalf of Link.

APPG Biodiversity

On 13 December Link attended a roundtable discussion with Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Biodiversity. Hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Biodiversity and chaired by Barry Gardiner MP. The roundtable addressed the need for stronger political leadership to ensure that the true value of the natural environment is taken into account in policy making. The intention

is for the APPG to set up a project to develop and publish a set of case studies that demonstrate how environmental programmes can also produce considerable benefits to the economy and society. Discussion also focussed on the delivery of *Biodiversity 2020*, Local Nature Partnerships and Nature Improvement Areas, Species Recovery Programmes and invasive non-native species, amongst other issues.

Link is also responding to the APPG's inquiry into the Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity 2020, emphasising our concerns around profile and delivery for these strategies that were laid out in *Nature Check 2012*.



Invasive Non-Native Species

Letter to Barry Gardiner MP

Link has written to Barry Gardiner MP to strongly support an Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Policy Group within the current suite of Policy Groups associated with the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Biodiversity. Concern exists that INNS will not receive sufficient political profile across government departments and across the different political groups within the currently proposed Policy Groups.

Invasive Non-Native Species roundtable

On 22 January 2013, the INNS Task and Finish Group will be holding a roundtable with the Minister for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs, Richard Benyon MP. The meeting will focus on Link's analysis of the [GB Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy](#) and recommendations for taking this area of policy forward.



Land Use Planning

Environmental Impact Assessment Directive review

On 6 December, the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, made a [written statement](#) on the European Commission's proposal to amend Directive 2011/92/EU on environmental impact assessments. Eric Pickles stated that 'environmental impact assessments are a European Union requirement which impose significant costs on the planning system, over and above long-standing, domestic environmental safeguards in planning law.' Link will be attending a meeting with Defra to discuss the EIA Review on 11 January 2013.

Consultation on permitted development rights

Link has responded to the consultation on extending permitted development rights for homeowners and businesses. The response covers building extensions on article 1(5) land (i.e. land within a National Park) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the roll-out of superfast broadband.



MCZs feature in EFRA Questions

On 6 December, the Minister for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs, Richard Benyon MP, faced several questions at EFRA questions about the Government's approach to designating Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). Full details can be found [here](#).

Triennial Review Marine Meeting

On 16 January Link will be attending a Marine Stakeholder Meeting organised by Defra's [Triennial Review Team](#). The meeting will specifically address the work of Natural England and the Environment Agency in relation to the marine environment. Please contact [Elaine](#) for more information.



Strategic Policy Statement

The Blueprint for Water Coalition has [submitted comments](#) to Defra's consultation on the Strategic Policy Statement (SPS) and Social and Environmental Guidance (SEG) to Ofwat. The Blueprint welcomes the SPS and the SEG. The emphasis placed on partnership working, both in relation to catchment management and the supporting comments on expanding metering, is also welcomed.

Water stressed areas consultation

The Blueprint for Water has [responded](#) to the Environment Agency's consultation on improving the classification of water stressed areas. The response supports the new methodology, but calls for universal metering, rather than compulsory metering on the basis of the water stressed area methodology.

Water Working Group meeting

On 4 December the Water Working Group met to provide feedback on the Blueprint for Water Scorecard launch, to reflect on Blueprint work in 2012 and look at work planning for 2013. The 2014 review of water pricing (PR14) and the Water Bill were also discussed.



Meeting with Defra:

Link's Whales Group will be meeting with Defra in the New Year to discuss a range of UK and international cetacean issues including Icelandic Whaling and the protection of highly mobile species in the proposed Marine Conservation Zone network. The date is yet to be confirmed but is likely to be in late January or early February.

South Korea drops plans to resume whaling:

The South Korean Government has formally dropped its much criticised plan to resume "scientific" whaling in its waters. Under International Whaling Commission (IWC) rules, a formal proposal for the hunt was required by 3 December, but none was filed. An official from South Korea's fisheries

ministry said "We've decided to carry out 'no-kill' scientific research and, therefore, it became unnecessary to submit such a request". South Korea had unveiled its plan to resume whaling at an IWC meeting in Panama in July, but the move was condemned by many countries and environmental groups and reports emerged just weeks later that the government was reconsidering its position.



Enforcement Authorities meeting

On 17 December Link's Wildlife Trade Working Group met with: Nevin Hunter, Head of the National Wildlife Crime Unit; Ian Knox, Head of the Metropolitan Police Wildlife Crime Unit and Alison Clarke from the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency. Discussions focused on: UK wildlife crime priorities; the recommendations set out in the Environmental Audit Committee report on wildlife crime; the Law Commission review of wildlife law and elected Police and Crime Commissioners.



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