

E-bulletin June 2013

Welcome to Link's June 2013 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 [Louise](#).



Triennial Reviews

On 27 June Defra published its reports on the Triennial Reviews of the [Environment Agency \(EA\) and Natural England \(NE\)](#), and of the [Joint Nature Conservation Committee \(JNCC\)](#).

In his [Ministerial statement](#), the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, said he had concluded that "the EA and NE should be retained as separate public bodies with separate purposes and functions, but that both bodies should continue to reform how they deliver their services to their customers and drive further efficiencies. The bodies will be tasked with delivering the conclusions of the Reviews, developing a jointly-owned implementation plan in close consultation with Defra. Defra will hold to account the leadership of both bodies for the delivery of the reforms."

The Secretary of State also concluded that "JNCC is the most appropriate organisation to deliver its functions, and should be retained as a non-Departmental public body. The Review has identified a number of measures to deliver a more effective and efficient service which JNCC will now implement, developing their implementation plans in close consultation with Defra and the Devolved Administrations, and reporting regularly on progress."

Link will be discussing the detail of the reports with members over the coming weeks.

Link's original responses to the Triennial Review consultations can be viewed at the following links:
http://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/link_response_to_triennial_review_feb13.pdf
<http://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Joint Links Response JNCC Review Apr13.pdf>

Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)

On 26 June the Chancellor announced sweeping cuts across Government. With a 10% cut, Defra was amongst the Departments hardest hit. These cuts come on top of the deep cuts already made in the CSR 2010. Defra has already shouldered a disproportionately large cut of 30% in real terms between 2010-15. This took their budget down from £2.4 billion in 2010/11 to £1.7 billion in 2014/15. This CSR takes Defra's budget down to £1.6 billion for 2015/16, nearly half its 2010 level in real terms.

The costs to the natural environment are likely to be even larger than the headline figure, especially when The Times reports a Defra insider saying "We're past efficiencies and into very difficult decisions. Flood defence, animal and plant health can't be touched — they are crucial, as we have seen in recent years. It's the 'nice to have' stuff that will have to go."

CAP reform – a bad deal for wildlife

A very disappointing deal on the CAP was agreed on 26 June in Brussels that fails to support more sustainable and wildlife friendly farming. An important component of this reform round were proposals to ‘green’ direct payments under Pillar I. However, these proposals were significantly weakened by Agriculture Ministers and Members of the European Parliament on the Agriculture Committee. Link will now be working to ensure that the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, makes the best of the deal in the UK by prioritising agri-environment schemes in Rural Development Programmes and implementing greening in a way which secures positive environmental outcomes.

Petition hand in to 10 Downing Street

On 12 June Link joined marine representatives from RSPB, Marine Conservation Society, The Wildlife Trusts and WWF to deliver over 350,000 pledges to Downing Street, calling for the urgent designation of Marine Conservation Zones and the establishment of an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas. The hand in received good publicity regionally and nationally including a letter in The Times and some positive coverage on social media.

Dredging proposals

In May the Blueprint for Water Coalition wrote to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, calling for formal stakeholder engagement on the Government’s plans to review regulations that control the dredging of watercourses. Owen Paterson has since replied to the Blueprint to confirm that the Environment Agency will involve stakeholders when the dredging proposals are being developed. The letter also offered reassurance that the Government is committed to ensuring that watercourse maintenance does not harm the environment.

Blueprint members have since met with the Environment Agency to discuss the detail of the proposals. Blueprint members welcomed the opportunity to engage and are developing a considered opinion. In the meantime, the Blueprint remains sceptical that the proposal will address the problems associated with large volumes of water in the landscape, and are concerned that they may even have the potential to cause further harm to our already threatened rivers, and the wildlife that they host.

Secretariat update

Julie Middleton, one of Link’s Policy and Campaigns Coordinators, left Link this month. We would like to thank Julie for all her hard work and dedication to the role, she will be sorely missed. Julie will be keeping in touch with Link and is staying in the ‘Link family’, working as Campaigns Officer for The Wildlife Trusts. We wish her every success in this new role.

Please [click here](#) for an up to date list of which member of the secretariat is looking after which work area.



Meeting with Robin Mortimer

On 12 June Link held a very productive meeting with Robin Mortimer, Director of Sustainable Land Management at Defra, on the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS). Discussions focused on: funding and greening; advice and facilitation for farmers; integration; and targeting. Link will continue to engage with Defra on these issues throughout the development of the scheme.

Meeting with Sarah Hendry

Link met with Sarah Hendry, Director of Rural Development, Sustainable Communities and Crops at Defra, on 7 June to discuss: CAP implementation; direct payments; the Rural Development Programme for England; NELMS and the recently published State of Nature Report.

Food Security

Following publication of Link's statement on food security - [Sustainable and Secure: 10 steps for the future of food](#) - in May, Link held a meeting on 4 June to discuss advocacy work around the report. The statement outlines the key actions and interventions that would be necessary to deliver sustainable, sufficient and secure supplies of food.

Working Group meeting

The Agriculture Working Group will be holding a meeting in August. This will be the group's annual away day and they will be discussing the RDPE, the Uplands and Parliamentary activity.



Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

The Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG), part of the Governance structure for the delivery of *Biodiversity 2020*, held a meeting on 12 June to primarily discuss delivery progress reporting and the TBG risk register. Katherine Hawkins attended on behalf of Link and the next meeting will be held in September.



Annual Stakeholder Forum

On 18 June Link attended Defra's tenth GB Stakeholder Forum on Non-Native Species, in Cardiff. The Forum was chaired by Jeremy Eppel, Deputy Director at Defra, with key speakers including: Niall Moore, GB Non-Native Species Secretariat; Trevor Renals, Senior Technical Advisor on Invasive Species at the *Environment Agency*; Trevor Salmon, Head of INNS and Native Species at Defra; and Carrie Hume, Wildfowl & Wetland Trust and Chair of Link's INNS Task and Finish Group. The Forum provided an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the GB review and the development of non-native species policy. It was also confirmed at the Forum that the GB review will take into account the forthcoming EU legislative instrument on Invasive Alien Species.

Meeting with Defra

On 31 July Link members will be meeting with Defra officials at the WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre, to discuss the review of the GB Strategy and to reflect on the Stakeholder Forum meeting in Cardiff. The day will also include a meeting of the INNS Task and Finish Group.

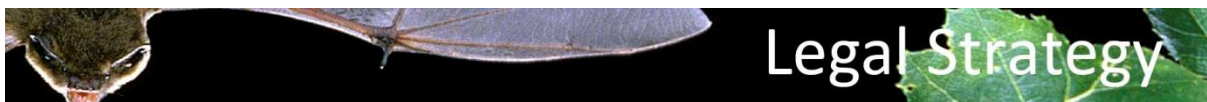


Meeting on biodiversity offsetting

On 10 July Link will be holding a joint Land Use Planning Working Group and Natural Values Task and Finish Group meeting to discuss the forthcoming Government Paper on biodiversity offsetting.

Working Group meeting

On 5 June the Land Use Planning Working Group met to discuss the review of planning practice guidance, biodiversity offsetting, planning guidance for fracking and the Growth and Infrastructure Act (2013). The group also looked at long-term planning including a discussion on social housing and a spatial plan for England.



Conservation covenants

Link's [response](#) to the Law Commission's consultation on conservation covenants was submitted this month. A conservation covenant is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a responsible body to do (or not do) something on their land for a conservation purpose. Link welcomes conservation covenants as proposed by the Law Commission, and believe that they have the potential to play an important role to positively affect change in the conservation sector.

EU Balance of Competences

Link will be providing evidence to Defra on the impact of EU policy and legislation on the environment as part of the Government's review of the EU's Balance of Competences. The call for evidence was announced on 20 May and will run for 12 weeks, closing on 12 August.



Marine Working Group Meeting

The next face-to-face Marine Working Group meeting will be held on 22 July at the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation offices in London. Agenda items for discussion include: Marine Conservation Zones; ecological coherence; the Joint Links Seminar; Marine Planning; and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.



Natural Values

Meeting with Defra on biodiversity offsetting

Link met with Defra on 4 June to discuss biodiversity offsetting. Defra officials outlined the three options that the Government will be looking at: strengthening the current voluntary approach to offsetting; introducing a consistent approach to assessing the harm caused by a development (by evaluating every proposed development against the offsetting metric, but continuing to leave the remedy for that harm to local discretion); and introducing a consistent approach to both assessing and remedying the harm caused by a development (by using the offsetting metric to identify the level of harm and the appropriate offset). Link's key points were that any offsetting system would require: effective regulation; a robust metric; appropriate expertise and capacity; and social equity being taken into account. Defra stated that marine offsetting would not be included within any offsetting system.

Meeting on biodiversity offsetting

On 10 July Link will be holding a joint Land Use Planning Working Group and Natural Values Task and Finish Group meeting to discuss the forthcoming White Paper on biodiversity offsetting.

Natural Values seminar

In the coming months Link will be organising a seminar to improve member understanding of a range of natural value issues including biodiversity offsetting, natural capital and ecosystem services.



Water

Environmental Improvement Unit Charge

The Blueprint for Water has [responded](#) to the consultation on the proposal to use Environmental Improvement Usage Charge (EIUC) funds to implement hydromorphological changes. The Blueprint has recommended that, given the rapidly changing policy landscape around the EIUC, this consultation should be delayed for six months. In response to the proposals, the Blueprint agreed that the EIUC should be used to implement hydromorphological measures to address unsustainable abstraction, but only under certain circumstances, and that funds already collected under the Charge should be so used to that end.

Working Group meeting

On 15 July the Blueprint for Water will be holding a Working Group meeting to discuss: the Price Review of Water 2014; Water Bill advocacy; Blueprint 2015; the Significant Water Management Issues consultation; and the EIUC consultation.

Meeting with Defra

On 29 July Link will be meeting with Defra to discuss the Blueprint 2015, in particular what asks we will be looking for by 2020, and how we can provide clarity to Defra on how ratings against those asks will be assigned in future assessments of progress against the new Blueprint.



Whales

Meeting with Defra 15 July

The Whales Group will be meeting Nigel Gooding, Deputy Director of Marine Biodiversity at Defra, on 15 July to discuss how to maximise pressure on Iceland, with EU accession talks on hold, and as the new Government settles in. Iceland's fin whaling activities are expected to resume at the end of June.

Australia v Japan Whaling Case

Australia's case against Japan's 'scientific whaling' activities began in late June at the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Japan attempts to kill 935 minke whales and 50 fin whales every year in the Southern Ocean, and has killed more than 10,000 whales since the IWC ban came into force in 1986. Australia has asked the court to withdraw all whaling permits from the Japanese fleet. The ICJ hearing will end on 16 July and a ruling is expected by the end of the year.



Wildlife Trade

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

Link has written to the Attorney General, the Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP, calling for the CPS to strengthen its efforts to successfully prosecute wildlife criminals, as recommended in the Environmental Audit Committee's report on [wildlife crime](#). Link will also be responding to the CPS's consultation on the [Interim Guidance on Victims' Right to Review](#) to request that wildlife crimes be included in the scope of the policy.

Environmental Audit Committee

Link has written to Joan Walley MP, Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, to follow up on the Government response to the Committee's report of its inquiry into wildlife crime.

Working Group meeting

Link's Wildlife Trade Working Group will be meeting on 23 July in preparation for the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) meeting, due to take place later that month. The group will be focusing on follow up from CITES CoP16 and wildlife crime enforcement.



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