

E-bulletin May 2013

Welcome to Link's May 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](#).



Meetings in Brussels

On 15 - 17 May Kate Hand (Link secretariat) attended meetings in Brussels on the forthcoming legislation on Invasive Alien Species (IAS). Kate met with Marina Yannakoudakis MEP (Conservative, EU Environment Committee), to discuss the legislation and to gauge Conservative support for the proposals. Kate also attended the two-day European Environment Bureau Biodiversity Working Group meeting, where she presented the view of UK NGOs on the legislation, focusing on the need for: inclusion of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) principles on IAS; effective criteria for species 'of EU concern', which focus on ecological damage; strategic surveillance; action on pathways, including ballast water; action on species of 'member state concern' and ecosystem resilience. The Commission also presented on their IAS proposals, and in addition there was discussion of the Natura 2000 biogeographic seminars; 'no net loss' and biodiversity offsetting; and the European budget.

Triennial review of Natural England and the Environment Agency

On 2 May, Link's Director, along with Mike Clarke (Chief Executive, RSPB) and Shaun Spiers (Chief Executive, CPRE) met the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Rt Hon. Owen Paterson MP, to expand on our [position](#) regarding the triennial review of Natural England and the Environment Agency. Link understands that Defra will publish a report on its conclusions in June or July. We also took the opportunity to welcome the Secretary of State's efforts to secure improvements to the Common Agricultural Policy that will benefit both the rural economy and the natural environment.

Sustainable and Secure

The final colour copy of the Link statement on Food Security was published in May and can be downloaded from the Link website [here](#). Titled *Sustainable and Secure: 10 steps for the future of food*, the statement outlines the key actions and interventions that would be necessary to deliver sustainable, sufficient and secure supplies of food.

Biodiversity offsetting

On 9 May, Link members attended a stakeholder forum on biodiversity offsetting hosted by the Secretary of State, Owen Paterson MP, which comprised a panel debate followed by a Q&A session. Most stakeholders were in favour of biodiversity offsetting and it was announced that the first two schemes have been approved under Defra's biodiversity offsetting pilots. However, attendees also raised a range of concerns around timing of a national system and where offsets would have to be provided in relation to the development concerned.

Members of the Natural Values Task and Finish Group will also be meeting with Defra on 4 June to discuss biodiversity offsetting in advance of a Government consultation to be published in the summer.

Marine funding

Link is pleased to report that it has secured funding from the John Ellerman Foundation, for three years, for the full time role of Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator. This grant will ensure we can continue our work to secure better protection of marine wildlife and effective management of our seas.



Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)

Link's Agriculture Working Group continues to engage with Defra on the development of the next RDPE through its informal stakeholder engagement processes. In May, Link members attended a RDPE Executive Group meeting where Defra gave a presentation on its 'value for money' multi-criteria analysis approach to the prioritisation of RDPE activities. Link followed up on this presentation with relevant Defra officials to clarify the methodology behind this analysis and identify its likely use in future decision making processes.

Link has arranged to meet with two Defra directors overseeing the development of the RDPE in early June to continue dialogue with them on this topic and to communicate our key messages on the content and design of the next programme.



Trilateral meeting

In June, Link will be holding a trilateral teleconference with Defra and Natural England to work through the delivery questions about *Biodiversity 2020*, which were identified at the last Terrestrial Biodiversity Group meeting.

Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

The Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG), part of the Governance structure for the delivery of *Biodiversity 2020*, will be holding a meeting on 12 June to discuss, among other things, delivery progress reporting and the TBG risk register.

England Natural Environment Indicators

On 8 May, Defra published the [England Natural Environment Indicators](#), which came out of Natural Environment White Paper commitment 90 "We will develop a set of key indicators...to track progress on the ambitions of this White Paper. These will include a new, compact set of biodiversity indicators for the England Biodiversity Strategy. We will consult on them and finalise them by Spring 2012".



Invasive Non-Native Species

Species list

We are currently developing a list of all aquatic and terrestrial INNS in the UK, in preparation for the review of the [GB Strategy](#) and the new EU legislation. Link members will be holding a teleconference on 5 June to discuss the list in more detail.

Stakeholder event

On 18 June Link members will be attending Defra's tenth Stakeholder Forum on Non-Native Species. The forum will focus on the review of the GB Strategy and will include case studies such as *Didemnum* eradication and marine pathways, Local Action Groups and rapid responses and biosecurity. There will also be workshop sessions on the GB Strategy in the afternoon.



Land Use Planning

Taylor Review

The Department for Communities and Local Government has [published](#) a summary of the responses to their consultation on the Taylor Review of Planning Practice Guidance. The consultation found that support for the Review group's recommendations was widespread. The Government are still considering their response to the Review, but they have stated that they will signpost only their own guidance (as opposed to third sector guidance), that they will not cancel any existing guidance before the new suite is in place, and that they will not institute a charging system for the proposed online planning guidance portal. Areas most commonly highlighted by respondents for additional guidance included the Duty to Cooperate, Strategic Environmental Assessment/ Sustainability Appraisal/ Environmental Impact Assessment, viability and landscape protection.

Working Group meeting

On 5 June the Land Use Planning Working Group will be holding a meeting to discuss the Guidance review, biodiversity offsetting, planning guidance for fracking and the Growth and Infrastructure Act (2013).



Legal Strategy

EU Balance of Competences

In summer 2012 the Government announced the launch of a review of the EU's [Balance of Competences](#) to audit what the EU does and how it affects the UK. The second semester of the review started on 20 May and included a call for evidence on the [environment and climate change](#). The consultation period will last for 12 weeks, closing on 12 August.

Group meeting

On 20 May the Legal Strategy Group held a meeting to discuss the EU [Balance of Competences](#) review, [conservation covenants](#) and the Law Commission review of wildlife law. The Legal Group will be responding to the Law Commission's consultation on conservation covenants which closes on the 21 June.



Marine planning update

A public consultation on the first English Marine Plan is expected at the end of June, and the Scottish National Marine Plan is due to be consulted on later in the summer as part of a “mega-consultation” on MPAs and renewable energy. Meanwhile, European Parliament and Council discussions are continuing on the establishment of an [EU Marine Spatial Planning Directive](#).

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) Petition hand in at Downing Street

On 12 June four Link member organisations, Marine Conservation Society, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts and WWF, will be presenting a joint-petition to Number 10 Downing Street signed by over 350,000 people calling for the creation of an ecologically coherent network of MCZs.



Natural Capital Committee

On 5 June members of the Task and Finish Group will be meeting with the Secretariat of the Natural Capital Committee to discuss the Committee’s report and next steps.

Task and Finish Group meeting

On 29 April Link held the inaugural meeting of its Natural Values Task and Finish Group. Discussions focused on the group's Terms of Reference and key areas of work, which will include engaging with: the Natural Capital Committee; the report of the Ecosystem Markets Task Force; biodiversity offsetting; the second phase of the National Ecosystem Assessment; the Treasury; and the APPG Biodiversity’s group on natural capital. The next meeting is due to take place on 25 June.



Meeting with Defra

Members of the Blueprint for Water met with Defra’s Water Bill team on 7 May. Issues were raised around the proposals for non-water company storage and upstream competition; the Blueprint welcomed the inclusion of the Strategic Policy Statement and a resilience duty for Ofwat. The group also discussed the relationship of new legislation on Sustainable Urban Drainage to the current implementation of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010). No decision has yet been made on moving the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme into the Price Review 2014.

Meetings with water companies

Southern Water came to the Link offices on 10 May to present their draft Water Resource Management Plan (dWRMP). Southern Water’s proposals included innovative ideas around shadow pricing of water and the inclusion of a wider range of drought data, which they have used to develop a more resilient dWRMP. The Blueprint will be responding to Southern Water’s consultation on their dWRMP in due course.

Blueprint for Water members also met with Yorkshire Water on 10 May. The meeting covered greater integration of Blueprint for Water members with Yorkshire Water's planning processes and developing better partnership working going forward.

Meeting on Price Review 2014 (PR14)

On 13 May the Blueprint for Water met with Defra, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Ofwat to discuss PR14. The group heard presentations on the progress of the National Environment Programme and Customer Challenge Groups.

Canal and Rivers Trust meeting

On 20 May Link Secretariat members met with the Canal and Rivers Trust to brief them on Link's work, in particular the work of the Blueprint for Water coalition. There is significant overlap between Link's water and biodiversity work and the Canal and Rivers Trust, and (as a very significant manager and abstractor of water) the Trust is in a unique position in terms of needing to meet a very wide range of commitments.



Letter to the University of Aberdeen

On 29 May Link's Whales Group wrote to Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Aberdeen, to raise an issue of concern linking the killing of whales in the name of science and the use of data obtained from this lethal research to the university.



WSPA event

On 15 May Link attended WSPA's cruelty in a concrete jungle event hosted by Deborah Meaden at the Natural History Museum. The event provided an opportunity to learn more about WSPA's partnership with the Metropolitan Police's Wildlife Crime Unit to tackle the illegal trade in wildlife in London and included a private viewing of the *Extinction: Not the end of the world?* exhibition.

Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner

On 30 May Link members attended a roundtable hosted by Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire, Olly Martins and his deputy, Tafheen Sharif to discuss issues around wildlife crime in Bedfordshire.

