

E-bulletin: November 2012

Welcome to Link's November e-bulletin. Please see below for our top stories and updates from our working groups. If you would like to subscribe to our e-bulletin or submit news items, please contact [Louise](#).



Nature Check 2012

On 27 November Link launched its flagship publication [Nature Check 2012](#). The report was launched at a Parliamentary reception hosted by Joan Walley MP, Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee. The Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, gave the [keynote speech](#), followed by a lively Q&A session, with questions on areas including EU budget, CAP reform, access to the countryside and invasive species.

The report is Link's second assessment of the Coalition Government's performance on the natural environment and aims to both hold the government to account and support effective policy-making and implementation. The 'traffic-light' assessment concludes that the Government is achieving 'green' on just two of its 20 commitments (protection of whales and of elephants). Of the remaining 18, the Government is failing on four (red), and making moderate, but insufficient, progress on 14 (amber).

Link also commissioned ComRes to run a [poll](#) alongside the report which revealed that 84% of people think that the natural environment boosts their quality of life and only 17% of people agreed that this is the 'greenest government ever.'

The launch saw strong representation from Link members, MPs and peers, Government officials and other stakeholders. Joan Walley welcomed attendees and highlighted the impeccable timing of the report's publication, just before the budget statement and at the start of the UN Climate Change Negotiations. Link's Director, Dr Elaine King, introduced the report and noted that Link's assessments stem from the expertise and breadth of insight of its members. During his speech, Owen Paterson declared that he will radically reprioritise Defra so that a 'laser-like focus' is given to rural economies, infrastructure for growth without environmental effect and animal and plant diseases. Mr Paterson said that the Nature Check report comes from a 'glass half empty', rather than a 'glass half full' perspective in places and expressed upset at his low scores for Common Agricultural Policy reform, flood management and marine issues. Mr Paterson finished by saying that, despite disputing some of the report's conclusions, it has an important role to play in the continuing debate on how we best conserve the natural environment.

We would like to thank all of Link's Working Groups for their hard work and support that helped make the [report](#) a success!

Blueprint for Water Scorecard 2012 published

On 6 November the Blueprint for Water coalition successfully launched its [Blueprint for Water Scorecard 2012](#) at a Parliamentary reception in the House of Commons. The launch was hosted by

Anne McIntosh MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Water, and Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Water, gave the keynote speech.

The *Blueprint for Water Scorecard 2012* assesses the Government's progress against the 2010 [Blueprint for Water](#), using report card style A – E ratings. The 2010 *Blueprint for Water* identified actions needed to achieve sustainable water by 2015. The scorecard rated Government's progress with four Cs, five Ds and one E.

The launch was well attended and saw discussion on how well NGOs feel the Government is delivering on water policy, in the context of the recently published Water White Paper and the forthcoming Water Bill. Carrie Hume, Chair of the Blueprint for Water coalition delivered the opening speech, introducing the Blueprint coalition and the scorecard findings. Richard Benyon discussed abstraction reform; restoration of chalk streams and the encouraging results from the Catchment Based Approach pilot areas. He noted that primary legislation is not always necessary to bring about change and expressed that he felt the scorecard ratings were 'harsh'. The speech was followed by an interesting Q&A session with questions on invasives, pesticides and abstraction reform.

Triennial Review

On 23 November, Link sent a letter to the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, regarding the forthcoming triennial review of the Environment Agency and Natural England. Supported by 16 Chief Executives of Link member organisations, the letter stressed the importance of the Agencies in helping the Government meet its commitments in the Natural Environment White Paper and the Water White Paper. It also urged that benefits of any reorganisation, merger or other structural changes should clearly outweigh the inevitable cost and disruption. The letter outlined the core criteria against which the proposals and outcomes of the Review can be publicly assessed. These included the following questions:

1. Is there an independent champion of the natural environment, with a clear focus on its restoration and protection?
2. Are the Agencies free to inform evidence-based policy and deliver its implementation, based on sound science?
3. Do the Agencies have the necessary resources, capacity and technical expertise to protect and enhance the natural environment?
4. Can the Agencies provide effective, co-ordinated place-based delivery of conservation objectives, alongside non-governmental organisations?
5. Can the Agencies effectively carry out their regulatory functions?

Formal launch of the review, including the terms of reference, will take place in the next few weeks, likely ahead of Christmas.

Link will be writing to Defra in the forthcoming weeks to provide further detail on our members' views and will continue to liaise with Defra's triennial review team and others with an interest in this issue.

The Natural Environment: Commodity or Common Good?

Link's Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 5 December at the Campaign to Protect Rural England offices in London. The agenda includes a Chairs and Vice Chairs discussion session, Link AGM official business and the post-AGM debate. This year the debate will be chaired by

Gareth Morgan, Head of External Affairs at the RSPB and will address the question: *Is the Natural Environment a Commodity or Common Good?* Speakers include: 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. The deadline for registration has now passed, but please contact [Louise](#) if you would like to attend. For more information on your AGM voting rights, please contact your Link representative.

EU Budget

In the lead up to the EU budget negotiations, Link wrote to MPs pressing them to make the point to their party leadership that the UK position must be based on ensuring value for money for the EU taxpayer and that key funds for rural development which provide so many benefits for all, should be protected. The letter was supported by 21 Chief Executives of Link member organisations and will be followed up with a more detailed briefing to MPs next month on our key areas of concern for the Common Agricultural Policy.

Growth and Infrastructure Bill

Link has produced a [briefing on the Growth and Infrastructure Bill](#) which has been submitted to the Bill Committee. Supported by 11 Link members, the 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.

EFRA Committee inquiry into the Draft Water Bill

On 20 November, Rob Cunningham (RSPB) and Nicci Russell (Waterwise) [gave oral evidence](#) on behalf of the Blueprint for Water coalition to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee on the Draft Water Bill. Rob and Nicci raised concerns over the lack of action on abstraction and water resources reform in the Draft Bill. Water efficiency for domestic customers was also highlighted as a gap in the Draft Bill. It was recommended that legislation that restricts compulsory metering to areas of water stress be removed. The recently published [Blueprint for Water Scorecard 2012](#) was also discussed, noting that the Blueprint gave fewer Bs and fewer Es than in the 2008 scorecard, but overall a rating of "must try harder" was given.

MCZ Parliamentary Bulletin

Link has published the latest in its series of [Marine Parliamentary Briefings](#). The latest edition focuses on Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and outlines the significant economic, environmental, health and recreational benefits that would be generated by designating an ecologically coherent network of 127 sites.



Agriculture Working Group meeting

Link's Agriculture Working Group held a meeting on 30 November and brought together Parliamentary officers from across Link's membership to discuss Common Agricultural Policy Reform and Rural Development Programmes. The group also discussed work planning for next year.

Meeting on uplands

On 29 November Link held a meeting hosted by the Woodland Trust at their offices in Grantham to discuss uplands policy. The meeting was used to develop a Link position on uplands; identifying key issues that are of concern to Link members and discussing how these should be tackled. Preparations were also made for the meeting with Natural England's uplands policy leads which is taking place in January 2013.

Rural Development Programmes

Link has a place on the new stakeholder 'subgroup' on the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Chaired by the RDPE Programme Director, Andrew Robinson, the group will provide views on the development of the new programme including what the RDPE might look like overall and how it might work.



Meeting with Defra

On 8 November members of the Biodiversity Working Group met with Robin Mortimer, Director for Sustainable Land Management and Livestock Farming, and Chris de Grouchy, Deputy Director for EU and UK Biodiversity Policy Delivery from Defra to discuss the effective delivery of [Biodiversity 2020](#), [Nature Check 2012](#) and Ash dieback.

APPG Biodiversity

The Biodiversity Working Group held a teleconference on 27 November to discuss the forthcoming All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Biodiversity inquiry on the Natural Environment White Paper and *Biodiversity 2020*. The group also discussed the upcoming APPG Biodiversity debate on biodiversity and the natural environment with Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Biodiversity, which is taking place on 13 December.



Review of guidance

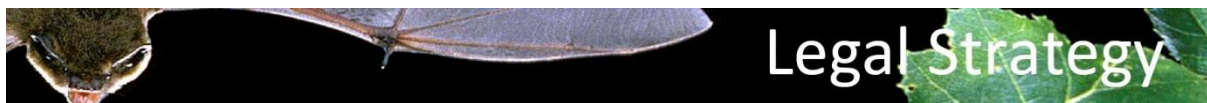
The Department for Communities and Local Government has initiated a review of all existing planning guidance that will identify what guidance can be cancelled, what new guidance is needed to support the National Planning Policy Framework, and what guidance needs to be retained whilst that new guidance is being developed. The review group has put forward an initial report for the Autumn Statement, and will present its final report in mid-2013. Link has submitted a letter to the review group outlining our concerns around the process of the review.

Land Use Planning Working Group meeting

Link's Land Use Planning Working Group met on 9 November to discuss the Growth and Infrastructure (GI) Bill, the Department for Communities and Local Government's review of guidance, the 2013 workplan and research on the NPPF.

EAC Committee report on Sustainable Development Indicators

In October, the land use planning working group [submitted evidence](#) to the EAC inquiry on sustainable development, and the committee have now published their [final report](#). The committee have focused mainly on the overarching alignment between the framework for Sustainable Development and National Well-being Indicators, and around environmental issues gave recommendations only on the natural resource use indicator.



Law Commission review

Link has been working on a cross-working group response to the Law Commission's [consultation paper on Wildlife Law](#) to be submitted on 30 November. Further details on the response will be published next month, in the meantime if you have any questions please click [here](#) or contact [Julie](#).



Science and Technology Committee Inquiry into Marine Science

On 28 November Joan Edwards (The Wildlife Trusts), Alec Taylor (RSPB) and Jean-Luc Solandt (Marine Conservation Society) provided evidence on behalf of Link at a public session of the Science and Technology Committee Inquiry into Marine Science. The committee asked Link a number of questions which ranged from the evidence base for MCZs, the difference between 'robust' and 'best available' evidence, socio-economic evidence and mobile species.

Stakeholder Focus Group Meeting

Link attended a meeting of the MMO's Stakeholder Focus Group on 23 November. Defra delivered a presentation on the progress of the MCZ consultation, which is due to be launched shortly. The MMO talked through the draft process for managing licensable and non-licensable activities in MCZs. The afternoon session included a discussion about developments in marine planning. Defra also provided an update on the Triennial Review of the Environment Agency and Natural England, and the forthcoming review of JNCC. A marine workshop on the Triennial Review will be held on 16 January.

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

On 22 November Link delivered a presentation on its marine project work to Grant Managers at the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, who fund the post. The meeting was also an opportunity to receive updates on the marine conservation work being carried out by our colleagues in the devolved countries, and to hear about the major challenges they are facing.

Waterfront Marine Conservation Conference

On 8 November Link attended the Waterfront Marine Conservation Conference, which included interesting debate and discussion from a range of speakers from government, NGOs and industry including the Minister Richard Benyon MP and the Director of Marine at Natural England, Alan Law.

Meeting with Rodney Anderson

On 6 November Link met with Rodney Anderson, a Board Member at the MMO to discuss a range of marine policy issues including planning, MCZs and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.



Blueprint for PR14 CEO roundtable

On 15 November, the Blueprint coalition held a very productive roundtable with CEOs and senior representatives of water companies to discuss the 2014 review of water pricing (PR14). Issues covered included: abstraction; catchment management; Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS); water efficiency and metering. Common ground was found in many of the areas discussed and a sub-group will now be set up to look at ways NGOs and water companies can work together going forward.

Meeting with Defra

On 22 November the Blueprint coalition met with Defra to discuss the consultation on the Strategic Policy Statement (SPS) to Ofwat. The SPS sets out the priorities which Ofwat should keep under review and incorporates Social and Environmental Guidance. The Blueprint coalition will also be responding to the consultation on the SPS.

Meeting with Water UK

The Blueprint coalition met with Sarah Mukherjee, Director of Environment, and Rob Wesley, Head of Policy, at Water UK on 30 November, to discuss PR14, the Water Bill and the [Blueprint for Water Scorecard 2012](#).



South Korean Whaling

The government of South Korea has been moving forward with preparations for whaling for scientific purposes. The South Korean Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is considering submitting a scientific whaling proposal to the International Whaling Commission (IWC). If South Korea were to implement a scientific whaling program, a proposal would have to be submitted six months in advance of the IWC Scientific Committee meeting. Since the meeting is scheduled for 3 June 2013, the proposal would have to be submitted by 3 December.



Enforcement Authorities meeting

On 17 December Link's Wildlife Trade Working Group will be meeting with enforcement authorities to discuss: 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. We will also be discussing ways in which NGOs and the enforcement authorities could collaborate more closely in the future.

Elections for Police and Crime Commissioners

Prior to the police and crime commissioner (PCC) elections on 15 November, Link wrote to each candidate to ask that, if elected, they will commit to properly enforcing wildlife legislation and ensure that police forces are properly resourced to carry out their duties in combatting wildlife crime. The letter was supported by nine Link members and [46 positive replies](#) were received from PCC candidates. We will be sending a follow up letter to elected PCCs in the coming weeks.

Joint NGO Liaison Group meeting

On 1 November Link members attended a meeting of the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) on the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The meeting focused on preparations for the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES which will take place in Thailand in March 2013.



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