

E-bulletin: July 2012

Welcome to Link's July 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](#).



Natural Environment White Paper

On 13 July, Link published its report, '[The first year of the Natural Environment White Paper: is the ambition being delivered?](#)'. The report concludes that, while significant 'milestones' have been achieved since [The Natural Choice](#) was published, three key issues present a risk to its effective delivery: the need for greater cross-Government commitment to delivery; insufficient urgency in identifying funding mechanisms; and a lack of clarity of purpose and dedicated support for certain initiatives. Link will continue to provide support to the Government in realising fully the ambitions laid out in *The Natural Choice*.

On 17 July, the EFRA Select Committee also launched a report into the NEWP, calling for the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to lead a cross-Government programme of action to put nature at the centre of the country's economic decision-making. MPs are concerned that Defra has failed to set out clear plans to deliver its commitment to ensure that government decision-making fully values the services nature provides. The Committee's report is available [here](#).

Securing the value of nature

On 17 July, Link's Director attended the event '[How do we secure the value of nature at home and abroad?](#)' hosted by the Policy Exchange. The event involved the formal launch of the Policy Exchange's report 'Nurturing Nature: Policy to protect and improve biodiversity', one year after publication of the Natural Environment White Paper.

Speakers included: the Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Richard Benyon MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment and Professor Dieter Helm, Chair of the Natural Capital Committee. To view a video of the event click [here](#).

Forestry Panel Report

On 4 July the final report from the [Independent Panel on Forestry](#) was published, followed by a stakeholder meeting on 10 July, which was attended by Dr Elaine King, Link's Director. On 18 July Link held a members' meeting on Forests to discuss next steps and Link's response to the report. Link members have largely welcomed the report and we will now be working to ensure Government adopts fully the report's recommendations.

Triennial review

Along with other Government departments, Defra is reviewing its Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) to ensure that their functions are still required, that their models are fit for purpose and that they offer taxpayers the best value for money.

The [Triennial Review](#) of the Environment Agency and Natural England will be conducted later this year, focussing on how the Government can best deliver on its ambitions for the environment and land management, for example as set out in its Natural Environment White Paper. Preliminary conclusions are expected in early 2013.

On 23 July, Link's Director attended a Defra stakeholder meeting which was convened to seek views around the scope and focus of the Review and how best to engage with stakeholders, ahead of the Review. Link is liaising with Defra over setting up a meeting and workshop to ensure that Link members can contribute their views effectively to the Review process.

Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting

On 25 July, Link convened a meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of its working groups. Participants took the opportunity to provide updates on the Groups' activities and achievements, along with identifying a number of themes for cross-working.

Joint Links' update

Link continues to collaborate with its sister Links in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. On 4 July, Link's Director held a teleconference to discuss a number of UK-wide issues, including marine conservation and the Quinquennial Review (QQR) of Schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The QQR is carried out every five years by the statutory nature conservation agencies (Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage), working jointly through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

The 6th QQR is scheduled to be submitted to Government late in 2013 and the public consultation runs from 2 July 2012 to 30 March 2013. For more information, click [here](#).

Joint Links' seminar

On 26 - 27 September, Northern Ireland Environment Link will host the Joint Links' biennial seminar at Strangford Lough in Belfast. The seminar, titled *Valuing Our Environment*, will look at the attitudes to the environment across the UK, with the aim of identifying ways to promote its protection by all of the UK constituent governments. Areas being addressed include: valuing our natural capital, CAP reform, marine, legal issues and joint working. The seminar is supported by a grant provided by WWF, however, we will need a small contribution (£20) from each delegate in the form of a booking fee. If you would like more information, or to book a place, please contact [Louise](#).



Working Group meeting

The Agriculture Working Group held a meeting on 24 July at Great Fen in Cambridgeshire primarily to discuss Link advocacy on CAP reform and the new Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Geoff Radley and Mark Felton from Natural England also joined the meeting to provide further detail on the next RDPE and to discuss how Link can best engage with its development.

Green Food Project

On 10 July Defra published the Green Food Project Report, which sets out a course of action to meet the increasing demand for food without harming the environment. Link members contributed to the report through involvement in the Green Food Group geographical sub-group and through responding to written drafts.



All Party Parliamentary Group for Biodiversity

On 9 July, Link attended a meeting hosted by the [All Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\) for Biodiversity](#) addressing how reform of the planning system could impact on biodiversity conservation and restoration in England and Wales. Speakers included Bob Neill MP, Minister for Planning, and Hilary Benn MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.



Best practice guidance on planning

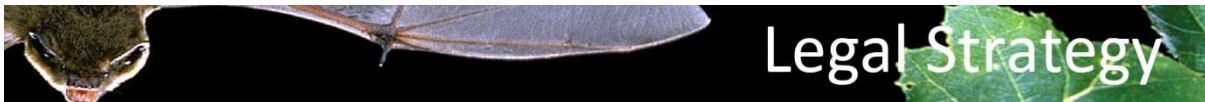
On 9 July the Wildlife Trusts and the Town and Country Planning Association published new [practical guidance for planners](#) which is set out to provide guidance to local authorities to ensure nature is taken into account in their local plans. The guide has been prepared with the support of a wide range of organisations including Link.

Meeting with the Local Government Association

The Land Use Planning Working Group met with the Local Government Association (LGA) in June to discuss the [NPPF](#), including [Link's response](#) and reactions at the LGA from local authorities and planners. The group are now looking to hold further meetings with key local planners later in the year.

LUPWG meeting

Link's Land Use Planning Work Group will be meeting in early August to discuss gathering information on the impacts of the NPPF and the guidance 'landscape'.



Law Commission review

The Law Commission review consultation paper will be published in mid-August, with the consultation period running to November 2012. The Commission will report to Defra – which commissioned the review – in February 2013 with a draft Bill being published in March 2014. For further information on the Law Commission review, click [here](#) or contact [Julie](#).

Conservation covenants

The Legal Strategy Working Group will be providing input into the Law Commission review, due to be launched in August, by collating comments from across the sector on the concept of conservation covenants and how they could contribute to the achievement of conservation objectives. A briefing paper and simple questionnaire have been prepared and circulated as a way of recording comments. Link volunteers will collate comments from the sector for submission to the Law Commission later in the summer.



Natural England Meeting

Link met with Caroline Cotterell, Principal Marine Adviser at Natural England (NE), on 3 July to discuss a range of issues including Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), Special Protection Areas, conservation advice and the EU Birds and Habitats Directives review recommendations. Link and NE agreed it would be helpful to meet more regularly over the coming year.

Advice to Defra on recommended MCZs

Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee published their [advice to Defra on recommended MCZs](#) on 19 July. Link subsequently attended a webinar with Natural England and a teleconference with Defra to talk through the advice and its implications. The advice concludes that the recommendations submitted by the regional MCZ projects meet many of the network design principles and represent good progress towards the achievement of an ecologically coherent network.



Blueprint for Water Scorecard

The Blueprint for Water coalition has held a series of teleconferences to discuss how to rate Government progress against the [2010 Blueprint for Water](#) targets. The scorecard is due for launch in November 2012.

Water Working Group meeting

The next Water Working Group meeting will be taking place on 30 August and will be hosted by the National Trust at their offices in Swindon. Agenda items include a PR14 update, National Drought Management Group update, the Blueprint scorecard and the draft Water Bill.



International Whaling Commission

Link delegates have now returned from the [International Whaling Commission \(IWC\) meeting](#) in Panama. Overall, Link was pleased with the UK Government's ongoing leadership on governance and financial issues at the Commission. Link was also pleased that the UK was able to again contribute to the small cetacean fund and well as speaking in support of environmental matters, such as marine debris. Link will be writing to the Minister to thank him for attending the meeting and to follow up several outstanding issues coming out of the Commission.



Joint NGO Liaison Group meeting

On 17 July, members of the Wildlife Trade Working Group attended a meeting of the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) on the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which took place to primarily discuss the [sixty-second meeting of the Standing Committee](#) in Geneva on 23-27 July 2012 and the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES which will take place in Thailand in March 2013.

Working Group meeting

The next Wildlife Trade Working Group meeting is planned for early September to discuss feedback from the recent JLG meetings, potential up-listing and down-listing proposal at CoP16 in March 2013 and COTES review updates.



Wildlife and Countryside Link
89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP
W: www.wcl.org.uk

Wildlife and Countryside Link is a registered
charity (No. 1107460) and a company limited
by guarantee in England and Wales (No.3889519)