

E-bulletin: May 2012

Welcome to Link's May e-bulletin. Please see below for our 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](#).



Strategic review

Link is currently reviewing its Operational Strategy for the period 2013-2015. The review will provide us with an opportunity to set Link's priorities, maximise the value of Link's work for its members and ultimately contribute towards enhancing nature conservation, landscapes and animal welfare. The review is progressing well, with a high proportion of members contributing to the review, through completing an online survey, participating in telephone interviews and attending a workshop for CEOs/Directors.

The review process is ongoing. Preliminary results will be discussed at the next Trustees' meeting in June, followed by consideration of a final report and recommendations in September. Formal proposals for the 2013-15 Operational Strategy will be put to Link members at the AGM in December.

Natural England's withdrawal of the uplands vision

Following the announcement in February that Natural England will be 'drawing a line through' its [vision for England's uplands](#), Link wrote to Poul Christensen, Chair of Natural England's Board, to express our concern and disappointment. The letter was supported by 20 CEOs/Directors from our member organisations.

Natural England has responded to Link's letter and has agreed to meet with Link in the coming months to discuss this matter further.

Wildlife welfare workshop

One of Link's strategic objectives is to raise the UK's commitment to wildlife protection and animal welfare. On 2 May, Link held a workshop to identify current concerns and opportunities relating to wildlife in the UK. The workshop was very productive, comprising a selection of presentations from invited experts, followed by a discussion on how Link can add value to the work being carried out by its members in this area.

Professor Stephen Harris, Professor of Environmental Sciences at Bristol University, opened with a presentation on current problems and inconsistencies with legislation protecting wild animals. Presentations were also given on: the current state of UK law; how public policy could be improved for the welfare of wild animals; the forthcoming Law Commission Review; enforcement issues relating to wildlife crime; and perspectives for particular species.

Following the workshop, on 29 May a group of Link members met to discuss animal welfare priorities for Link over the coming months. It was agreed that a key focus would be to respond, in collaboration with other relevant Link working groups, to the Law Commission's consultation on wildlife law, due to be published in July.

Thames Water Dinner

On 16 May, the CEO of Thames Water, Martin Baggs, hosted a dinner for Blueprint for Water members at the Oak Room, the historic board room of the Metropolitan Water Board. It was a useful and productive occasion and provided an opportunity to exchange views on a variety of issues including: the drought; the Thames tunnel; water efficiency; priority substances; and sustainable urban drainage. Blueprint members will be following up the issues discussed later in the year.

Pesticides Forum

Link has issued a statement in response to the [Pesticides Forum Annual Report 2011](#), noting that we do not always agree with the conclusions and recommendations of the Forum.

The Forum published its 2011 annual report on the impacts of and sustainable use of pesticides in May 2012. The Executive Summary contained the following statement: *"The work of the UK Pesticides Forum in 2011 confirms that the use of pesticides is not adversely impacting on the health of UK Citizens or the environment"*.

Link does not agree with this statement, nor with the statement that the UK's controls *"deliver high standards of protection for human health for the environment"*. We believe that much more can be done to protect people and the environment from pesticides and remain members of this forum in order to emphasise this point where possible and to encourage change to this effect.

To view Link's full response to the Pesticides Forum click [here](#).

Whales group meets the Minister

On 23 May, Link's Whales group met with the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, and separately with the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Commissioner, Nigel Gooding, and the Defra whales team to discuss the 2012 IWC meeting in Panama. Both meetings were positive and the main areas of discussion included Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling in West Greenland, the future of the IWC, marine debris and administrative matters.

Joint Links

Joint Links' biennial seminar will be hosted by Northern Ireland Environment Link, at Strangford Lough, Belfast on 26 - 27 September 2012. Areas being addressed include: valuing our natural capital, CAP reform, marine, legal issues and joint working. If you would like to book a place please contact [Louise](#).



Farming Regulation Task Force

The Farming Regulation Task Force, chaired by Richard MacDonald, was set up in 2010 to carry out a review of farming regulation. Link members met with Richard MacDonald at this time. The Task Force published a report in May 2011 and the Group is now working on implementation of the recommendations which Defra accepted. Link has again been invited to meet with the Chair to provide our views on the process.



UK Biodiversity Indicators

Defra has published a set of [24 indicators](#) for Biodiversity 2020, and has used Link's research, *Targeting Nature's Recovery*, in its assessment (p.34). Defra has also published a [statistical release](#) on these 24 indicators.

People Engagement Group meeting

On 30 April, the People Engagement Group (PEG) met to discuss the group's role and their terms of reference. It was agreed that the focus of the group will be to inform and influence, rather than to deliver. The group is working towards better defined objectives, e.g. for outcome 4 ("By 2020, significantly more people will be engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action"). The group will be establishing a number of Task and Finish groups to develop the outputs of the group, look at the audiences for engagement and what engagement should look like. The PEG will look to engage with and support the Terrestrial Biodiversity Group's Task and Finish Group on local delivery.


Meeting with Defra

The Biodiversity Working Group has secured a meeting with Robin Mortimer, Director for Sustainable Land Management and Livestock Farming at Defra, on 27 June. The group will take the opportunity to discuss the England Biodiversity Strategy (EBS) delivery plan and recently published UK Biodiversity Indicators for the EBS.



Going forward

Following the publication of [Defra's response](#) to its review of the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives, the task and finish group will be continuing as a virtual group. The group will seek to feed into [initiatives stemming from the review](#). The group will look to meet in October to discuss the progress of the review's recommendations and related issues.



Land Use Planning

Vice chair election

The Land Use Planning Working Group (LUPWG) will be holding an election for a new vice chair. If you would like to make a nomination please email [Kate](mailto:kate@link.org.uk) by Wednesday 13 June. Our thanks to Lee Bruce for all his work for Link and we wish him well in his new role at the Local Government Association.

Meeting with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

On 15 May, LUPWG members met with Peter Ellis and Julian Pitt from DCLG to discuss the implementation of the NPPF, the future role of guidance and the evidence base for planning. Following that meeting, Link members will have the opportunity to suggest its priorities for DCLG's 2012/13 research programme.



Legal Strategy

Law Commission meeting

On 22 May the Chair and Secretariat of the Legal Strategy Working Group met with the Law Commission to discuss its current project on conservation covenants. Link will be providing a briefing note for its members on this project and, as it is in its early stages, we will be contacting member organisations to gather views as to whether conservation covenants, if created, would/could be used to support their work.



Marine

Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Link is currently coordinating a Joint Links response to the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) (MSFD) consultation on the UK Initial Assessment and proposals for Good Environmental Status (GES). Link has arranged teleconferences throughout May to allow NGO experts from across the Links to discuss the key qualitative descriptors for determining GES. Link will be formulating a comprehensive written response to the proposals by the 18 June deadline.

Marine Working Group meeting

Link's Marine Working Group met on 28 May to discuss the MSFD, Marine Conservation Zones, and marine planning issues. Presentations were given by Dr David Tudor, Senior Marine Policy & Planning Manager at the Crown Estate and Jess Bersey, Living Seas Officer at the Wildlife Trusts.

Natural Environment White Paper

NEWP anniversary

On 7 June it will be one year since the [Natural Environment White Paper](#) was published. The NEWP virtual group will be holding a teleconference this week to discuss the anniversary and to reflect on experiences relating to its implementation.



Scorecard

Blueprint for Water will be producing a scorecard rating Government progress against the [2010 Blueprint for Water](#) publication, due for launch in November 2012. The scorecard will follow the format of the 2008 Blueprint scorecard and will also provide a narrative on the Water White Paper.



Meetings with the Minister and the IWC Commissioner

On 23 May, Link's Whales group met with the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, and separately met with the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Commissioner, Nigel Gooding, and the Defra whales team to discuss the [2012 IWC meeting in Panama](#). Both meetings were positive and the main areas of discussion included Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling in West Greenland, the future of the IWC, marine debris and administrative arrangements at the IWC meeting.



Joint NGO Liaison Group meeting

Members of the Link Wildlife Trade Working Group attended a meeting on 16 May of the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG), chaired by Defra's CITES and International Species Policy Team. Agenda items included: the CITES charging review; the COTES review; known and likely proposals at CoP16; the proposed Decision Making Mechanism; process for future ivory sales; and an update on the rhinos working group, among other items. The next JLG meeting will take place in mid July.

