

E-bulletin February 2015

Welcome to Link's February 2015 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 [Maria](#).



Communications Manager Vacancy at Wildlife and Countryside Link

Wildlife and Countryside Link is looking to employ a part time Communications Manager to help us the communications element of our 5 year strategy. This new post provides an excellent opportunity to make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of a small but highly influential charity. The right candidate will support Link's Director and trustees in developing and implementing a communications strategy that will help us build relationships, deliver powerful messages and engage our members and other stakeholders.

Candidates must have a strong communications background with experience in campaigning, stakeholder engagement, PR and broader communications. Charity or public sector experience is a real advantage.

The salary for this role is £32,500 pro rata plus pension and the closing date is 9th March 2015. To view the full advert, please click [here](#) or for more information, contact [Elaine](#).

Chalk Streams Conference

On 5 February, the Blueprint and WWF co-hosted the Chalk Stream conference at WWF's Living Planet Centre in Woking. The auditorium was packed with 100 passionate chalk stream conservationists. Attendees exchanged ideas and discussed the Blueprint for Water Group's [Save Our Waters](#) campaign, which is encouraging public engagement with the Environment Agency's consultation on how water bodies, including chalk streams, will be managed over the next six years.

As part of the [Save our Waters](#) work, the group launched a [poll](#) asking for the public's views on how many of our water bodies they believe should be healthy. The consultation ends on 10 April 2015 and we would encourage Link members and others to circulate the [questionnaire](#).

Letter to Defra on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) simplification

On 15 February, the Agriculture Working Group wrote to Defra to contribute its views to Commissioner Hogan's review of CAP implementation. The review focusses on simplifying the CAP and Link's letter criticises the existing simplification measures introduced to Pillar I, pointing out that further simplification will do little to deliver a simpler but more effective policy. The letter also took the opportunity to push for maximum modulation of funds (15%) to Pillar II.

Meeting with Lord de Mauley

On 9 February, a Joint Links delegation met with Lord De Mauley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at Defra, to discuss the REFIT review. Link's Director, Elaine King, represented the Joint Links' organisations, along with Carol Day (Vice Chair of Link's Legal Strategy Group); Julia Hanmer (Joint Chief Executive at the Bat Conservation Trust); and Kate Jennings (RSPB and Chair of the Joint Links REFIT Task and Finish Group).

The group explained how NGOs support the REFIT evaluation process in principle, but are concerned at the political motivations behind carrying out the process now, and the potential for it to be hijacked by those who wilfully misunderstand the purpose of the review. The group stressed that the collective NGOs' view is that improvements can be made without reopening the Directives and welcomed Lord De Mauley's confirmation that Defra's response to the Commission will reiterate the results of the 2012 English Habitats Directive Review. It was agreed to meet again in April, once phase one of the consultation is complete.

Meeting with the Home Office

On 12 February, the Wildlife Trade working group met with Nick Hunt, Head of the Tackling Crime Unit, and Tony O'Donnell, policy lead on wildlife crime. The group raised its concerns with the Home Office on NWCU funding, cybercrime and linking wildlife crime to the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. The group are pleased with the Home Office's commitment with the new counting rule for wildlife crime and look forward to working with them further in achieving a clear picture of wildlife crime in the UK.



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Pesticides forum annual report

The Pesticides Forum has produced a first draft of its 2014 annual report on the use of pesticides. Link is represented on this Forum and has submitted comments reiterating points we have made in previous years about risks to aquatic biodiversity from pesticides.



Animal Welfare Strategy Group Meeting

Link's Animal Welfare Strategy Group held its second meeting on 26 February. The Group discussed developing a 2015 work plan and continued to explore ways in which it can add value to members' work in raising the UK Government's commitment to animal welfare.



Terrestrial Biodiversity Group Communications subgroup meeting

On 14 January, Link's Director joined a teleconference of the TBG's Communications subgroup. Discussion focused on the subgroup's emerging communications plan, intended to be used by TBG members to explain clearly how Biodiversity 2020 can be delivered. The plan will also support communications around Defra's forthcoming Delivery Review, which assesses progress on delivering elements of Biodiversity 2020 and presents high level actions to ensure objectives are met. For more information contact [Tom Butterworth](#), Principal Advisor at Natural England.



The first phase of the REFIT process has begun. Four representatives from each of the 28 member states within the EU have been chosen to provide evidence on the REFIT evaluation of the Habitats and Birds Directives as set out in the review [mandate](#). The Joint Links REFIT group has been chosen as the NGO representative for the UK and will be submitting its evidence-based consultation response by 18 March.

Joint Links Task and Finish Group meeting

The Joint Links Task and Finish Group convened on 2 February. The meeting provided the Group with an opportunity to discuss the Joint Links' position and to plan engagement with external stakeholders. The next meeting is scheduled for 3 March.

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Invasive Non-Native Species

Following a review of Link's policy work, the INNS Group will be provided with support by the Link team from March 2015. Over the coming months, the group plans to address a number of specific areas, including: contributing to the JNCC-led review of Schedule 9; engaging with Defra on its England Working Group; and influencing the list of Union concern species for the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation. For more information please contact [Maria](#).

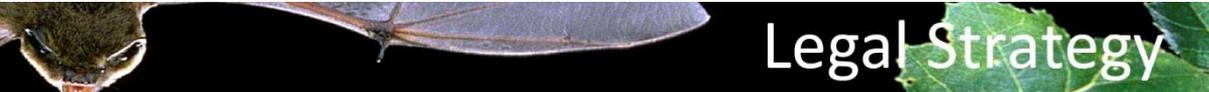


Land Use Planning

Land Use & Planning Working Group meeting

The team met to discuss 2015 plans and invited Frances Winder, chair of the Natural Values Task and Finish Group, to help the group shape the strategy work for biodiversity offsetting. The current Infrastructure Bill was also discussed and the team exchanged thoughts and ideas of how we can contribute as Link in the future.

The group will be meeting again on 4 March.



Legal Strategy

Conservation covenants

In June 2014 the Law Commission published a report on Conservation Covenants which included a draft Bill. A Government response to the report and an indication of Defra's intention with regard to the proposed legislative changes is still awaited.

Link's Legal Strategy Group will be writing to Liz Truss, Secretary for State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, DEFRA, seeking information on the status on conservation covenants.



Marine

Marine Conservation Zone Second Tranche

Link was disappointed at the Government's lack of ambition following the launch of its [consultation](#) on the next stage of Marine Conservation Zone designation in English and non-devolved waters. Only 23 out of a possible 37 sites are included in the consultation and a number of highly significant areas for marine wildlife have been dropped from the list.

Link met with Defra on 25 February to discuss the second tranche proposals in more detail and will also be submitting a response to the consultation by the 24 April deadline.

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

Link will be coordinating a Joint Links response to Defra's public [consultation](#) on its proposed programme of measures to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status in UK seas by 2020, which was launched at the end of January.

Joint Link Marine Chairs teleconference

The Chairs of the Joint Link marine groups and taskforces attended a teleconference on 19 February to discuss how the Links can work effectively together this year on a range of UK marine issues such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, mobile species and the development of an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas in UK seas.



Flood defence consents and environmental permitting

On 17 February, Link's Blueprint for Water Working Group submitted its response to the consultation 'making flood defence consents part of the environmental permitting framework'. In principle, the Blueprint supports integrating flood defence consents into the Environmental Permitting regime. However, the group opposes the implementation of standard rules which can pose significant risks to achieving good ecological quality.

The Blueprint subsequently wrote to Dan Rogerson MP expressing its deep concerns at the government's proposal to remove key safeguards against flooding, and the impacts the proposal would have on people and our natural heritage.

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Water company roundtable

Members of the Blueprint for Water Working Group met with consultancy company Indepen. Indepen are currently helping four water and sewerage companies consider how policy can be implemented to meet the challenges currently facing the sector. The companies are focusing in particular on delivering the policy outcomes set out in Water for Life (the Water White Paper). Blueprint for Water is pleased to engage with this work which aims to engage NGOs and help water companies ensure that the environment is at the core of their business.

Ofwat meeting

On 11 February, Link met with Ofwat to discuss the final determinations for the Price Review 2014 and Ofwat's current strategy. Ofwat outlined how it is seeking assurances from water companies that they are on course to deliver outcomes and priorities for customers. Water companies will need

to produce a framework with outcome delivery incentives in order to help Ofwat pinpoint any weaknesses in their plans.

Southern Water meeting

Blueprint for Water Working Group met with Southern Water on 13 February. Southern Water outlined their policies and long term view, emphasising the importance of valuing the environment and understanding that, on some occasions, the cost of abstraction can be counterproductive. Overall, Southern Water are willing to make changes and taking innovative risks which are environmentally sound.



Meeting with the IWC Secretariat

Link's Whales Working Group met with the Dr Simon Brockington, Executive Secretary at the [International Whaling Commission \(IWC\) secretariat](#), on 6 February to discuss a number of issues including the length of Biennial meetings, actions arising from the feedback process, and practical aspects of NGO participation in IWC Working Groups and Plenary.

Whales Working Group meeting

Link's Whales Working Group met on 3 February to discuss Japan's Small Type Coastal Whaling aspirations, Greenland's aboriginal subsistence whaling, IWC governance and finances and the group's work plan for the year ahead.



Wildlife Crime Community Involvement Panel

On 19 February, Link's Wildlife Trade Working Group attended the Wildlife Crime Community Involvement Panel meeting. The panel were introduced to the 'knowledge hub' which is an internal website with information on panel members and crime reports. This forum provides a good platform from which to network and discuss cases.

In addition, a presentation on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (COTES) reported that wildlife crime is not, in most cases, a priority and penalties given to offenders tend to be inadequate. This adds to the challenge faced by prosecutors of wildlife crime cases and it was concluded that further guidance and expertise should be shared amongst prosecutors. COTES is currently under review and the Wildlife Trade working group is developing its response to the consultation.

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

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