

E-bulletin January 2014

Welcome to Link's January 2014 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 [Morwenna](#).

Top Stories

Water Bill

Members of the Blueprint for Water coalition were pleased to welcome the Government's recent amendments to the 'resilience duty' in the Bill, which Blueprint coalition members had called for during the Bill's passage through the House of Commons. The Government has amended the 'resilience duty' so that it includes environmental resilience. Blueprint members now believe this duty could play an important role in ensuring that water companies deliver environmental improvements to the UK's already stressed and over-abstraction rivers and watercourses. The Water Bill has now moved into the House of Lords, where the second reading took place on 27 January. The Blueprint coalition published a [briefing](#) for the second reading, calling on the Government to amend the Bill to:

- include a commitment to introduce abstraction reform;
- introduce a series of environmental safeguards to upstream competition;
- allow water companies, when supported by customers, to introduce water meters where there are clear social benefits in doing so; and
- Introduce a liability guarantee that would ensure fracking companies have the funds available to pay for the cost of clean-up, should an accident occur during the entire lifetime of a well.

Ofwat meeting

Following the Blueprint coalition's meeting with Cathryn Ross, Ofwat's CEO, in December 2013, members of the Blueprint met with Ms Ross again on 27 January. At the very positive meeting, discussion included the draft water company business plans, and Ofwat's 2014 – 2015 Forward Programme, including its development of a new organisational strategy. The Blueprint coalition will be submitting a formal, written response to Ofwat's consultation on its Forward Programme.

Biodiversity 2020 – Communications and funding

Members of the group met with Defra Director, Robin Mortimer, in addition to other Defra colleagues and representatives from Natural England, on 13 January. The main focus of the meeting was to discuss the funding and communications of the Government's Biodiversity Strategy, in light of concerns raised in Link's Nature Check report. A number of constructive proposals were identified, which will be developed over the coming months.

EAC Inquiry

The INNS TFG submitted written and oral evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee's inquiry on invasive species. Evidence focussed on: the costs of INNS (which are estimated to exceed

£1.7billion/ year in Britain alone); the support of the NGO community for EU-level action, without which action at individual Member State level will always be significantly undermined; and the need for a refreshed strategy that is smarter and more far reaching than before, and which is supported by well-devised and implemented communication programmes.

Marine Parliamentary meetings

Link arranged a number of meetings and teleconferences between Marine Parliamentary officers during January to discuss plans for enhancing MP engagement and support for marine issues during 2014. Link also arranged a meeting with Zac Goldsmith MP on 21 January to discuss the plans in more detail.



Agriculture Working Group meeting

The Agriculture Working Group met on Friday 10 January to discuss its workplan for 2014 and 2015. The group reflected on its successes and failures during 2013 and where it had achieved the greatest impact. The policy focus for the year will include Food Security and issues relating to the New Environment Land Management Systems (NELMS).

Common Agricultural Policy

In December, the Government announced that it would be transferring only 12% of funds from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2. Link members were extremely disappointed that the Government will not be transferring a full 15% and will continue to promote that NELMS to ensure it delivers for biodiversity.



Virtual Group

The Biodiversity Virtual Group will continue the work of the Biodiversity Working Group but with light-touch secretariat support from Link and without a Chair or Vice Chair. Information exchange will continue, representatives will remain on key external fora, and the group will pop-up if any urgent action is required.

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Roundtable meeting with Lord de Mauley

The INNS TFG will be holding a roundtable meeting with Lord de Mauley, Minister for [Natural Environment and Science](#), on 17 March, to discuss progress with the GB Invasive Non-Native Species

Strategy review and the upcoming EU Invasive Alien Species regulation, as well as the connections between invasive species with plant health and bio-control.

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APPG Biodiversity Invasive Non-Native Species sub-group

The Link INNS TFG has been working alongside the APPG Biodiversity Invasive Non-Native Species sub-group, attending meetings and facilitating the delivery of their objectives. In particular, Link has drafted a briefing for the Group's MPs, outlining the impact invasive species have on cost of living.

EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation

The INNS TFG have also been lobbying for amendments to the draft EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation, to ensure that it is fit for purpose. The group produced a response to the UK approach to the regulation, which has been submitted to Defra.

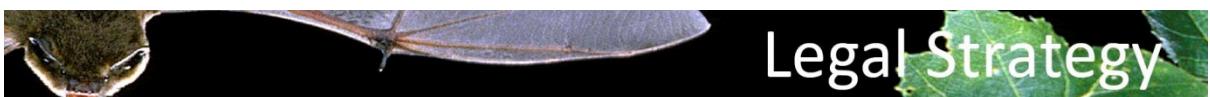
GB Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy review

The TFG has continued to influence the Invasive Non-Native Species GB strategy review at a high level, maintaining a close relationship with Defra during the review, with further meetings planned for February/March 2014.



APPG Biodiversity Planning sub-group

Link members will be joining the next meeting of the planning sub-group of the APPG on Biodiversity, on 18 February 2014. We are delighted that Brendan Costelloe, Vice Chair of Link's Land Use Planning Working Group, will also be the Chair of the APPG Biodiversity planning group.



Judicial Review

The Government's response to the most recent consultation on further reforms to Judicial Review is due to be published at the end of this month or in early February. Once available, the group will plan its next steps, particularly if there are implications for standing before the High Court. Link submitted [evidence](#) to the [Ministry of Justice's consultation](#) in October 2013.

Conservation Covenants

The Law Commission has refined and developed the scheme of conservation covenants, as proposed in its [Consultation Paper](#). The Commission has confirmed that it is ready to move into the final stage of the project and plans to publish a Report, impact assessment and draft Bill in the summer.

HS2

Last week, a Supreme Court [judgment](#) confirmed that the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive did not apply to HS2 and that the consideration of alternatives under the Directive is more restrictive than environmental organisations had previously hoped.



MSFD Monitoring Programmes consultation

On 8 January Defra launched a UK-level consultation on proposals for Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Marine Monitoring Programmes. Link will be coordinating a Joint Links response to the consultation by the 2 April deadline. The consultation covers all 11 MSFD descriptors, including biodiversity, noise and pollution. On 27 January Link attended a MSFD stakeholder event to hear more about the Government's approach to the consultation. Link also raised some initial concerns regarding the monitoring of cetaceans in UK waters.

Environmental Audit Committee inquiry on MPAs

On 17 of December 2013, the Environmental Audit Committee launched an inquiry into Marine Protected Areas. Link has responded to the Committee's call for written evidence and a panel of Link representatives will also be providing oral evidence to the committee on 5 February.

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Marine Working Group meeting

The next meeting of the Marine Working Group will take place at 11am on Wednesday 12 February at Link's offices. The agenda will include a discussion of the latest situation with MCZ designations, ecological coherence, the MSFD and marine planning.



Natural Values

Biodiversity Offsetting

We are currently awaiting a Government response to its consultation on the biodiversity offsetting green paper, as well as its response to the Environmental Audit Committee inquiry on biodiversity offsetting. Link will be seeking to meet officials at an early opportunity following the publication of the Government position.

A duty to promote growth

The Natural Values Task and Finish Group submitted evidence to the Joint Committee on the Draft Deregulation Bill in late 2013. The Committee published its response in January 2014. Link raised significant concerns over the proposed duty on non-economic regulators to 'have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth', citing potentially dangerous conflicts with regulators' other primary duties. Disappointingly, the Joint Committee welcomed the duty, provided that 'safeguards are in place to ensure that the growth duty does not take precedence over regulation'

and that the overriding and principal objective of regulators remains the protection of the public interest.' Link will be seeking further opportunities to raise its concerns about the implication of the duty in 2014.



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Derogation for Cypermethrin

Wildlife and Countryside Link and Wales Environment Link have submitted a [response](#) to the consultation on renewing derogations from the Forest Stewardship Council to permit the use of cypermethrin and alpha-cypermethrin. The Link organisations oppose the renewal of derogation for the two substances because we believe the application has failed both necessary tests: that there are exceptional circumstances; and that there is no evidence of negative impacts over the last five years.



Whales Working Group meeting

The next meeting of the Whales Working Group will take place at 2pm on Monday 10 February at Link's offices. The agenda will include a discussion of both domestic and international cetacean issues and the Link response to the MSFD monitoring programmes consultation.

DECC pre-meeting

On 4 February Link will be hosting a pre-meeting teleconference for members of the Whales and Marine working groups ahead of a meeting with the Department for Energy and Climate Change to discuss offshore energy issues on 6 February.



Letter to Defra

On 13 February London will be hosting a high level summit on [International Wildlife Trade](#), hosted by the Prime Minister and Co-chaired by the Defra Secretary of State Owen Paterson, and the Foreign Secretary William Hague. In January, Link wrote to Michael Sigsworth, Head of the CITES Policy Unit at Defra, to outline our requests to be included in the declaration. Link's letter focussed on measures to achieve three key outcomes: reducing consumer demand for ivory, rhino horn and tiger products; preventing the trafficking of ivory, rhino horn and tiger products; and improving livelihoods, reducing poverty and thereby reducing incentives to poach animals.

Letter from the Home Office

In January Link received a reply from Norman Baker MP, inviting us to meet with Mike Warren, Head of the Home Office's Crime Reduction Hub. Link had originally written to Mr Baker to ask for an opportunity to learn more about the Home Office's role in the Cross-Departmental Task Force and to discuss wildlife crime within UK borders.



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