

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

**Company Limited by Guarantee no. 3889519 (England and Wales)
Registered Charity no. 1107460**

REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2012

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 December 2012

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REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Trustees

Chair Victoria F Chester (appointed as Chair 5 December 2012)
Paul de Zylva (resigned 5 December 2012)
Deputy Chair Jeremy Biggs
Treasurer David Lind

Sue Armstrong-Brown
Amy Coyte (appointed 5 December 2012)
Helen Meech (appointed 5 December 2012)
Paul Miner (appointed 5 December 2012)
Hazel Norman (appointed 5 December 2012)
David Bullock (resigned 5 December 2012)
Lucy Cooper (resigned 30 September 2012)

Vice President

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

Company Secretary

Elaine King

Registered Office

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Company Registration Number

3889519

Charity Registration Number

1107460

Independent Examiner

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WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

The Trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the year ended 31 December 2012.

REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Structure, governance and management

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 7 December 1999 and registered as a charity on 5 January 2005.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In 2007 the Memorandum and Articles of Association were reviewed, both to ensure compliance with the Companies Act (2006) and Charities Act (2006), and following a number of years using the previous Memorandum and Articles of Association which had raised the need for further clarification. Under those Articles, the members of the Board of Trustees are elected by a postal vote in advance or by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees must retire at the third Annual General Meeting after that at which he or she was first elected, and are eligible for re-election for a further term ending on the sixth Annual General Meeting after their first election. The Treasurer must retire at the Annual General Meeting every three years but may stand for re-election with no maximum term of office.

Objectives and activities

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together environmental voluntary organisations in the UK united by their common interest in the conservation and enjoyment of the natural and historic environment. Our aim is to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the voluntary sector through collaboration. We have 40 member organisations which collectively employ 11,000 full-time staff, have the help of 175,000 volunteers in the UK and the support of over 8 million people.

Established in 1980, Link exists to further the conservation, protection and enhancement of wildlife and landscape and to further the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside by the public by facilitating collaboration between voluntary organisations in the UK. It does this in the following ways:

- Providing of secretariat support for a number of working groups addressing various policy issues;
- Convening and coordinating joint meetings with statutory conservation agencies, Government officials, departments and ministries;
- Coordinating environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO) representation on external fora;
- Preparing and publishing joint policy statements and press releases;
- Organising events such as seminars and conferences on particular policy areas;
- Facilitating exchange of information and ideas between members;
- Representing Link and its members to external bodies including Government and other stakeholders.

Statement of public benefit

The Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link confirm that the organisation has Charitable Purposes pursuant to the Charities Act 2006. The Trustees believe that there are clear and identifiable public benefits arising from the pursuit of Wildlife and Countryside Link's aims and objectives, and that these benefits are freely available to the general public without restriction.

Link Strategy (2010-2012)

In 2010 Link began working to its first ever collectively agreed strategy. Its long term goal is to ensure that the issues which Link and its members represent are recognised as part of good Government. This work continued in 2011 and 2012, with Link addressing a set of strategic objectives built upon the desires and aims of Link's members, working primarily, but not exclusively, through its specialist working groups. Through our network of members, supported by a professional Secretariat, Link has taken forward its commitment to deliver bolder campaigns, selective policy work, greater political engagement, and clearer messaging. To do this, Link's working groups cooperate on campaigns, policies and skill-sharing, the Management Committee thinks and acts strategically, and the Director and Secretariat are proactive in supporting and guiding members and advocating externally on behalf of Link and its members.

In 2012, Link conducted a three-yearly review of its operational strategy. We used the opportunity to take a holistic look at our corporate strategy, our business model (particularly with respect to ensuring Link's financial stability) and how we might adapt ourselves to most effectively meet members' needs from 2013. Member organisations were consulted on their views through an online survey, a workshop - involving chief executives and senior staff – and in-depth one to one interviews with Link staff and members.

The review found that Link's members value the service that the organisation provides, including: a professional team with a willingness to respond to member needs; information sharing and networking; an accessible place for joint policy formulation and advocacy; a strength of combined voice; effective working groups and a single point of contact for Government. Members also identified key areas where Link could improve its ways of working and we are currently developing our operational strategy for 2013-15 with these recommendations in mind.

Link's Annual General Meeting took place on 5 December 2012 at the Campaign to Protect Rural England in London. The agenda included a Working Group Chairs and Vice Chairs discussion on developing the new operational strategy and a post-AGM debate entitled 'Is the Natural Environment a Commodity or Common Good?'. The debate explored the significance - for people, wildlife, landscape and the economy - of valuing the natural environment, along with addressing the concept of biodiversity off-setting. The session was chaired by Gareth Morgan, Head of External Affairs at the RSPB, and comprised a thought-provoking debate involving the following panel of experts: Professor Dieter Helm (Chairman of the Natural Capital Committee); Cara Reece (National Programme Manager, The Environment Bank) and Dr Paul Anderson (philosopher, lawyer and ecologist).

Ways of working in 2012

In 2012 Link provided support for eight working groups on the following policy areas:

- Agriculture (Chair, Abi Bunker (RSPB); Vice Chair, Ian Woodhurst (CPRE))
- Biodiversity (Chair, Nicola Hutchinson (Plantlife); Vice Chair, Miles King (Buglife))
- Land Use Planning (Chair, Paul Miner (CPRE); Vice Chair, Brendan Costelloe (RSPB))
- Legal Strategy (Chair, Matt Shardlow (Buglife); Vice Chair, Carol Day (WWF))
- Marine (Chair, Joan Edwards (Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Kate Sugar (RSPB))
- Water (Chair, Carrie Hume (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust); Vice Chair, Janina Gray (Salmon & Trout Association))
- Whales (Chair, Mark Simmonds (Whale and Dolphin Conservation))
- Wildlife Trade (Chair, Heather Sohl (WWF); Vice Chair, Tom Quinn (International Fund for Animal Welfare))

Link also set up a new Task and Finish Group on Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS). INNS are a significant problem in the UK, and members were keen for Link to take the opportunity during 2012 to influence both the Government's review of the INNS Framework Strategy for Great Britain and the forthcoming European Regulations on Invasive Alien Species (the preferred European term for INNS).

Link closed its Task and Finish Group on the Natural Environment White Paper during the year, as the work of promoting the White Paper now fits more comfortably into the existing working groups. Link's

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Habitats and Birds Directives Task and Finish Group, established in 2011 to respond to Defra's review of the implementation of the two Directives, is continuing as a virtual group in order to share information on, and respond to, work by Defra stemming from the review's report.

Progress towards Link's strategic objectives

Link's strategic objectives for 2010 – 2015 comprise five 'policy' objectives that represent the collective aims of our members, and four 'service' objectives which we are pursuing as a membership organisation.

1. To present an integrated vision for sustainable land and water use that promotes effective mechanisms for supporting landscape-scale natural and historic environment conservation

Link is committed to an integrated vision for sustainable land and water use, and has pursued a variety of mechanisms for achieving this.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the biggest single lever for delivering environmental enhancement in the UK, and Link has undertaken an active advocacy programme in this area. This work is led by our Agriculture Working Group, which has a long-standing commitment to seeking reform of the CAP. Following publication of our position statement on CAP in November 2011¹, work in 2012 concentrated on disseminating the key messages from this position to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). In March 2012, Link submitted a response to Defra's discussion paper on the impact in England of EU Commission regulatory proposals for Common Agricultural Policy reform, post 2013, which was supported by 15 members.² In October 2012, a set of CAP briefings were produced and circulated to all UK MEPs ahead of key Committee meetings in Europe. These briefings were initiated by Link, but were supported by our Sister Links in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, demonstrating our commitment to developing a common UK message on CAP.

In November, Link members added their voices to the debate on the EU budget, with 21 chief executives supporting a letter to MPs ahead of the initial EU budget summit. The letter urged MPs to use their influence within both Government and their own parties to ensure a UK negotiating position which protected Pillar II of CAP and funding for Rural Development Programmes, which provide value for money for European tax payers.

Towards the end of the year, attention shifted to the domestic scene, as the agriculture group worked to develop and communicate its thoughts on how CAP funds should be spent in the next Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Group members were involved in RDPE and Agri-environment stakeholder forums run by Defra and Natural England and, in October, a ten-strong delegation met with Sarah Hendry (Defra's Director for Rural Development, Sustainable Communities and Crops) and her team to discuss the design of the next RDPE and plans for the next programme, along with the transition period preceding it. This is a priority area of work for the Agriculture Group in 2013 to ensure the next RDPE is well-designed, adequately funded and effectively delivers for the environment.

In February, Natural England announced the withdrawal of its vision for the uplands (*Vital Uplands*) which had been supported by many Link members following its publication in 2009. This prompted 20 Link chief executives to write to Poul Christensen (Chair of Natural England) to express their concern at this development. The chief executives stressed the importance of a clear vision and shared sense of purpose in securing the many goods and services provided by the uplands. A review of uplands policy was initiated by Defra later in the year, accompanied by a review of evidence by Natural England. Link has plans to meet with Natural England in early 2013 to discuss the results of its review of evidence and to engage in the forthcoming review of uplands policy.

¹ Wildlife and Countryside Link (2011) *Crunch time for CAP: choosing the right tools for a richer countryside*, <http://www.wcl.org.uk/crunch-time-for-cap.asp>.

² Wildlife and Countryside Link's response to Defra's discussion paper on the impact in England of EU Commission regulatory proposals for Common Agricultural Policy reform, post 2013 http://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Link_response_to_Defra_CAP_discussion_paper_March2012.pdf.

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During September, the Agriculture group met with Richard MacDonald (Chair of the MacDonald Task Force on Farming Regulation). At this meeting, Link highlighted the importance of good regulation to underpin Government's policy and to discuss the work of the Task Force in relation to specific issues of interest to members.

In December, the group published a position paper on Food Security, as a contribution to the wider public debate on this issue. The paper makes the point that food must be produced in a way that protects and enhances the natural resources on which its production depends, and sets out a series of ten actions and interventions that will help to deliver sustainable, sufficient and secure supplies of food for everyone in the future. Link will be disseminating this position statement in early 2013 and engaging with other stakeholders to influence the wider debate and emphasise the relationship between food security and the natural environment.

Link members retained a presence on the Pesticides Forum, providing a voice for the environment on this stakeholder body. A close watch was kept on plans for implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive – and particularly the development of a UK National Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Pesticides. A draft plan was published by Defra in the autumn, to which the group responded. We concluded that the draft Action Plan was wholly inadequate to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides in the UK and pressed the Government to introduce clear measures to address the negative impacts of pesticides, rather than rely too heavily on voluntary initiatives which tend to operate in the absence of clear targets and monitoring.

Like the CAP, much of the UK's most important environmental regulation also stems from Europe, from the **Habitats and the Wild Birds Directives**. Following the 2011 Autumn Statement, in which the Chancellor established a review of the implementation of the Directives on the basis that they were placing 'ridiculous costs on British businesses', Link established its Task and Finish Group to respond to the review.³ During early 2012, the group engaged closely with Defra and Natural England and submitted a response, which was supported by 21 Link members.

Link continues to dispute the Treasury's rationale for the review of the Habitats and Birds Directives, and the allegation of gold-plating. We were therefore pleased to see the final report conclude that the 'integrity and laudable ambition of the original Directives [should be upheld]'. Many of the recommendations were positive and should lead to better implementation of the Directives, and Link has therefore continued to engage with the review. This included responding to the consultation on the draft guidance on the application of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (which governs how sites which are otherwise protected from development can be developed in specific circumstances).

Other European-level levers for environmental protection include the Water Framework Directive (WFD). **Link's Water Working Group** continues to work with 16 member organisations, and two partners (Angling Trust and Waterwise), under the Blueprint for Water coalition. Blueprint responded to the UK Technical Advisory Group consultation on WFD standards in June. The coalition also wrote to Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, to support the European Commission's proposal for an additional 15 'priority substances' to be listed under the WFD. Listing additional substances puts a duty on member states to work to reduce those substances from its water. The Minister takes the view that there is currently insufficient evidence to justify the additional costs incurred if the 15 substances were to be listed. The group therefore wrote to Defra officials, presenting evidence relating to the cost-benefit analysis.

In March, the Blueprint responded to both the European Commission's 'fitness check' consultation on its own 'Blueprint for Water', which sets the scene for water policy at a European level, and to Defra's consultation on the four-yearly review of the Nitrates Directive. The Government response to the nitrates review showed that they agree with us on six proposals and disagreed on eight, but also that they largely disagreed with us on the proposals that have most influence on nitrate pollution in the water environment.

On domestic policy, the Blueprint engaged strongly with the Government's Water White Paper, *Water for Life* (published in December 2011) and the draft Water Bill stemming from it (published in July 2012). In the first half of the year, the group met with the Minister, Richard Benyon MP, and Defra officials to discuss the White Paper and the Bill. We also responded to the inquiry of the Environment,

³ Osborne G. (2011) *Chancellor's Autumn Statement to Parliament*, www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/as2011_index.htm.

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Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Commons Select Committee on the White Paper, as well as responding to and giving oral evidence at the Committee's inquiry into the subsequent Water Bill. The Blueprint submitted a detailed response to Defra's consultation on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). SuDS support sustainable land and water use by slowing the flow of water in order to; help prevent flooding; provide cleaner water; support habitats and species; and create green infrastructure. Amongst other things, these outcomes can support climate change mitigation and adaptation. The group repeatedly sought a meeting or clarification on next steps to the consultation but the Government took no action on SuDS in 2012. In early 2013, Defra established a stakeholder group on SuDS to work through the issues raised by the consultation, and has committed to implement the Act's provisions by April 2014.

Outside of parliamentary processes, the group secured two places on the Abstraction Reform Advisory Group, which is developing the process and standards for abstraction reform, and responded to the consultation around the cancellation of abstraction licences that are causing 'serious damage' to the water environment.

Another very significant lever at national level is the five-yearly price review of water (PR14). This is a vital opportunity to promote investment in environmental outcomes by water companies. The Blueprint has taken a strategic approach to this work, developing the *Blueprint for PR14*, which lays out how we believe PR14 can deliver against each of the Blueprint's '10 steps to sustainable water'. This approach has been welcomed by all the group's external partners, including Defra, the Environment Agency, Ofwat and individual water companies.

November proved to be a very busy and productive month for the Blueprint. The group held two important meetings to discuss the *Blueprint for PR14*. First, Link convened a roundtable between chief executives of water companies and Blueprint members. A very productive, high level discussion resulted, helping to develop relationships and flesh out shared aspirations – and areas of disagreement – around the price review. Link also organised a meeting with Sarah Mukherjee, Environment Director at Water UK, to discuss how we can jointly deliver more environmental outcomes through the price review. In addition, the Blueprint was approached by both Southern Water and Yorkshire Water, to discuss how NGOs can help deliver projects with water companies that deliver for water quality *and* biodiversity, typically through landscape scale catchment management schemes.

In November, Blueprint members also met with Defra, the Environment Agency, Ofwat and Natural England to discuss the different drivers around PR14. A further meeting is planned for early 2013. Also in November, the Blueprint responded to Defra's consultation on the Strategic Policy Statement and Social and Environmental Guidance of Ofwat (relating to the price review).

November also saw Blueprint hold a parliamentary reception to launch the *Blueprint for Water Scorecard 2012*. Hosted by Anne McIntosh MP (Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the All Party Parliamentary Water Group), and including a keynote speech given by the Minister, Richard Benyon MP, the launch was attended by over 50 stakeholders including parliamentarians, government officials, water companies and Link members. The Scorecard gives A – E scores for the Government's progress in delivering an integrated vision for the water environment, as measured against the 10 steps to sustainable water set out in the 2010 *Blueprint for Water*. Although the Government scored fewer Es than in the previous 2006 scorecard, it also scored fewer Bs (and no As). At the launch (and in meetings with Defra officials beforehand), members of the Blueprint stressed that they are keen to work with Defra to improve those scores, and we will be holding six-monthly meetings from 2013 onwards with Defra to pursue this.

Link's **Biodiversity Working Group** has continued to engage with the Government's biodiversity strategy, *Biodiversity 2020*. The strategy, published in August 2011, outlines the Government's ambition to halt the decline in biodiversity by 2020, in line with its European and international targets. The effective functioning of this strategy is therefore vital to protecting and enhancing the species and habitats which form the basis of our natural environment.

Broadly, the biodiversity group has pursued four interconnected areas of *Biodiversity 2020*: defining outcomes and indicators; and improving funding, delivery and communications. Two key documents

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have formed the basis of Link's lobbying and engagement over 2011 and 2012. Firstly, Link produced a critique of *Biodiversity 2020* and the Government's response to *Making Space for Nature*. This was followed by *Targeting Nature's Recovery*, an analysis of the Government's progress on the 2010 targets for priority species in England. Both documents were welcomed by the Government. *Targeting Nature's Recovery* was reported in the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Biodiversity's newsletter, which reaches a wide audience of MPs and NGOs. Natural England has stated that Link's critique highlights its own concerns, and is being used by the agency as part of the *Biodiversity 2020* programme. *Targeting Nature's Recovery* was also welcomed by Defra and Natural England, and its data and analysis were quoted in Defra's publication on *Biodiversity 2020* indicators.⁴

Link also pursued its advocacy work through regular meetings with Robin Mortimer (Defra's Director for Sustainable Land Management and Livestock Farming), in February, June and November 2012. Robin Mortimer is also Link's account manager for Defra and quarterly meetings with Link's Director commenced in December 2012. Link also held meetings with Natural England officials in February, June and October 2012. In addition, Link is represented on Defra's Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG), which oversees delivery of: *Biodiversity 2020*; the England Biodiversity Stakeholder Group; the People Engagement Group; and the UK Biodiversity Indicators Steering Group. Link was also invited to join the newly formed Biodiversity and Ecosystems Working Group, which is part of the National Adaptation Programme's 'Climate Ready' scheme. In seeking to define outcomes and indicators, the TBG set up a number of Task and Finish Groups in 2012. Link was represented on three of these groups.

The Land Use Planning regime is a vital tool for managing our use of natural resources and minimising the impacts of development on the environment. The **Land Use Planning Working Group** focuses on ensuring that the rules governing this particular set of levers are supportive of the natural environment - and access to it - via local authorities at a local level and via the Major Infrastructure Planning Regime nationally. During the early part of 2012, the group was closely engaged in lobbying around the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, which is the Government's single new policy document on planning.

The group met with Ruth Stanier (Director, Economy and Society) and Peter Ellis (Deputy Head of the Planning: Infrastructure and Environment Division), both at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), to discuss the NPPF and our views on priority environmental, access and participation issues. We also issued a press release laying out our 'red lines' for the NPPF in advance of its publication. After publication of the NPPF, the group wrote to Greg Clark MP, then Minister for Planning, and a Minister with whom Link had engaged extensively during the drafting of the NPPF in 2011. Link's letter welcomed the NPPF, in particular a number of policies that we had supported, for example: the commitment to a 'net gain' in biodiversity; the inclusion of the five 'principles' within the definition of sustainable development; and the purpose of planning as defined as 'to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.' Greg Clark subsequently wrote to thank Link for the role we played in the NPPF's development, saying 'I am grateful to you and to your members for the considerable attention you have devoted to this work, and for the seriousness with which you have approached it. Your contribution has been a vital component of a reform that will... help protect and enhance our natural and historic environment.'

In other areas of planning, the group responded to the consultation on the Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) for the abolition of regional strategies. However, instead of responding to the consultation on the SEA for each of the nine strategies, Link submitted a single response which highlighted the key overarching points on SEAs, thus effectively minimising the workload whilst maximising our impact.

The planning group has also continued to take an active interest in planning practice guidance, supporting the publication of guidance on biodiversity and green infrastructure⁵, led by the Wildlife Trusts and the Town & Country Planning Association. The group will respond to the report of the Taylor Review into planning practice guidance in 2013 and, once the work stemming from that review is complete, the group will consider whether there is a need for Link to publish additional guidance.

⁴ Defra (2012) *A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystems Services, Biodiversity 2020 Indicators: 2012 Assessment*, p.34.

⁵ The Wildlife Trusts and Town & Country Planning Association (2012) *Planning for a healthy natural environment: good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity*.

In October 2012, the Government published the Growth and Infrastructure Bill, which seeks to promote development and the building of infrastructure in order to boost economic growth. Following the Localism Bill, on which Link worked extensively through its 'Greenest Planning Ever' coalition, this new Bill proposes a number of significant amendments to the planning regime, some of which may have unintended, yet significant, adverse impacts on the natural environment and the public benefits it brings. Link is therefore developing briefing material with which to encourage MPs and peers to amend or remove damaging clauses. In particular, Link members believe that the provision that exempts the Secretary of State from the need to 'have regard' to the purposes of National Parks when installing broadband infrastructure sets a very worrying and also unnecessary precedent.

The Land Use Planning Working Group worked with other Link groups in 2012; for example, with the Agriculture Working Group, the Biodiversity Working Group and the Water Working Group in responding to the consultation on sustainable development indicators in October 2012. In addition, the group worked jointly with the Biodiversity Working Group on a Link written submission of evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity.

June marked the first anniversary of the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper and Link members took the opportunity to reflect on the first year of its existence and to share their thoughts with Defra. The **NEWP Task and Finish Group (virtual)** reconvened to develop a short paper entitled *Securing the Value of Nature: The first year of the Environment White Paper: is the ambition being delivered?* which was supported by 12 member organisations. The paper congratulated Defra for the achievements since publication – notably the clarity of policy it contained (and the influence this had on the final content of the NPPF) and the establishment of Nature Improvement Areas and Local Nature Partnerships. However, the paper also drew attention to the concerns of Link members regarding future delivery of the commitments within the White Paper. In particular, it warned of the need for: greater commitment across government to the delivery of the White Paper; greater urgency in identifying funding for the initiatives it contains; and dedicated support for these initiatives.

Link established a new **Task and Finish Group on Invasive Non Native Species (INNS)** towards the end of 2012, driven by the active interest of members of Link. Setting up the group was a timely opportunity to achieve change on this issue as the Regulatory Policy Committee was deciding on a ban on sale for selected invasive species. In addition, in 2013, Defra will be reviewing the GB INNS Framework Strategy and the EU Commission will publish its proposals for Regulations on Invasive Alien Species.

Link employed an intern to support the INNS group, due to the secretariat already working at full capacity. This was a very successful arrangement and has allowed the group to achieve a significant amount of work whilst providing valuable experience and skill-development to our intern, Heidi Richardson. Between October and December 2012, the group focussed on both domestic and international issues. It also evaluated the GB INNS Framework Strategy and developed recommendations refreshing the strategy. Part of this initiative involved: collating figures on the cost of INNS to NGOs; organising a roundtable meeting with Richard Benyon; and contributing to Link's response to the Law Commission review of wildlife law, which had made recommendations for new regulation for INNS. The group also lobbied successfully for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity to set up a Policy Group on INNS, which will raise the profile of the issue amongst MPs and be a locus for further action on the issue. In the international arena, the group started to develop recommendations on the Invasive Alien Species Regulations and wrote to Commissioner Potočník to support that work at EU level.

2. Help protect and connect marine species and habitats through the promotion of an ecosystem based approach to marine conservation

In 2012, the **Marine Working Group** continued to closely monitor and influence the progress of England's Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Project. Link met with Natural England and Defra marine officers on a regular basis to discuss progress on MCZ designation, marine spatial planning and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Link also wrote to Defra on a number of occasions to

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raise specific concerns regarding: the protection of mobile species; the environmental aspects of the first two marine plans; and fishing activities in European Marine Sites (EMS).

Link met with the Minister, Richard Benyon MP, in April to discuss a range of marine issues including the Government's plans for designating MCZs and the lack of protection for recommended sites from damaging fishing activity. During the meeting the Minister emphasised his support for marine conservation issues and reiterated the Government's commitment to establishing an ecologically coherent network of MCZs. In August, Link hosted senior Defra marine officers on a marine tour to view a recommended MCZ in Plymouth. We took the opportunity to explain the importance of protecting the site and the socio-economic benefits of the proposed network. In October, Link published a Parliamentary Briefing for Government and MPs further outlining the economic, social and environmental benefits of MCZs.

Representation on external groups continued to be an important part of Link's marine advocacy work. In March, Link attended a consultation workshop on the implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Link contributed to a number of meetings of the Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) Stakeholder Focus Group, which brings together MMO staff, Defra and marine-users, including NGO and industry representatives. Link was also an invited member of the MMO's Sustainability Appraisal Advisory Group and regularly attended meetings throughout the year. In August, Defra announced it would be making some significant changes to the way it manages damaging fishing activity in European Marine Sites (EMS) and subsequently offered Link the two NGO places on the implementation group overseeing the changes.

In December, Defra launched a public consultation on its plans to designate a first tranche of 31 MCZs in 2013. The Minister also confirmed that the Government expects to designate additional MCZs in the future to contribute to a UK ecologically coherent network of protect sites. Link will be responding to the consultation in early 2013.

In April, Link took the lead in coordinating the production of a comprehensive Joint Links response to the UK Government's public consultation on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This was a major step in the implementation of the Directive, as it related to the targets and indicators to achieve good environmental status in the marine environment by 2020. Link's response gained the support of 27 NGOs from across the UK. Link also arranged meetings between Government and Link representatives to discuss specific aspects of the consultation, such as the targets and indicators for commercially exploited fish and shellfish.

In November, Link provided evidence at a public session of the Science and Technology Committee Inquiry into Marine Science. The committee sought Link's view on a number of issues ranging from the evidence base for MCZs, the protection of mobile species, the issue of socio-economic data, and the difference between 'robust' and 'best available' evidence.

One of the key objectives of Link's **Whales Working Group** is to ensure better protection of cetaceans, in part through the reform of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) into a conservation body. The group also addresses other issues relating to cetacean conservation and welfare, such as ocean noise and marine debris.

A major focus for whales work in 2012 was the 64th Annual meeting of the IWC (IWC64) in Panama. Once again, Link was awarded two places on the UK's delegation to the IWC, which met in July. In advance of the IWC meeting, Link met with Defra and the UK Commissioner, Nigel Gooding, to discuss issues including the future direction of the IWC, sanctuaries, aboriginal subsistence whaling and the problem of ship strikes. A subsequent Link meeting with the Minister, Richard Benyon MP, included discussion on the continued whaling of Iceland, Norway, Greenland and Japan. Link also sent a briefing paper to Defra officials in advance of the IWC meeting, highlighting priorities and key areas of concern. Several Link members attended the IWC64 meeting, along with two Link/NGO representatives on the UK delegation.

Overall, Link was pleased with the UK Government's on-going leadership on governance and financial issues at IWC64. Link was also pleased that the UK was able to again contribute to the small cetacean fund as well as speaking in support of environmental matters, such as marine debris. One concern arising from the meeting was South Korea's announcement of its plans to resume scientific

whaling. However, the announcement was condemned by many countries and Link members, and in December the South Korean Government announced it would not be resuming its whaling activity.

In October, Link attended the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS) meeting of parties in Brighton. Link also submitted its recommendations to Defra ahead of the meeting. Key outcomes from ASCOBANS included the adoption of a new Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat. In addition, agreement was secured on priorities for research and conservation actions in the western part of the ASCOBANS Area, which comprises the Irish Sea and the European North Atlantic.

3. Raise the political profile of the ethical and economic value of biodiversity and the socio-economic and ecological impacts of its loss

In March, Link – for the first time – published a response to the Government's budget. Link used this opportunity to remind our stakeholders of the significant economic value of nature, and to bring together some relevant strands of Link's work: our response to the Habitats Directives implementation review; the then imminent publication of the National Planning Policy Framework; and the scores Government had received in Nature Check 2011. In Link's press release, our Director said, 'It is worrying that the Chancellor persists in wrongly casting our natural environment as a barrier to growth and prosperity... The Budget's description of planning reforms suggests that the Government will focus on economic growth at the cost of genuinely sustainable development. The Government still has the chance to ensure its new reduced planning rules will properly protect our wildlife and countryside not put it all up for grabs.'

Link published its **Nature Check** report again in 2012, following the successful 2011 report, and which was supported by 37 member organisations and our two partner organisations. All Link's Working Groups and Task and Finish Groups came together to draft and agree the text for the report. *Nature Check 2012* repeated its detailed analysis of the Coalition Government's specific commitments, as well as presenting a high-level narrative which argued that well-directed funding spent on nature, and access to nature, is money well spent, because it reaps the significant economic and social benefits of ecosystems services. The report also argued the public has demonstrated its abiding love for the natural environment around, for example, the proposal to sell-off parts of the public forest estate, and that this represents a strong moral *and* ethical imperative to protect biodiversity and landscapes – and access to them – for their intrinsic, as well as their instrumental value.

In addition to this narrative, *Nature Check 2012* also specifically welcomed establishment of the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) and the Ecosystem Markets Task Force (EMTF). Both groups were set up following Government commitments in the Natural Environment White Paper. The NCC aims to support the integration of natural assets into national accounting, while the EMTF aims to support businesses in understanding and working with ecosystems. Link's Director attended the formal launch of the NCC in November 2012 and held discussions with Ian Cheshire, Chair of the EMTF, in early 2013.

Biodiversity offsetting is a proposal stemming from the Natural Environment White Paper. The concept has the potential to deliver significant gains in biodiversity, but could equally threaten to promote development that is then 'offset' with inappropriate, temporary habitat re-creation. In 2013, Link will be responding to the proposals on biodiversity offsetting contained in the EMTF report *Valuing Nature: Harnessing ecology to strengthen the economy*. In advance of those reports, Link initiated a debate on valuing nature, and biodiversity offsetting at its AGM, entitled 'The Natural Environment: Commodity or Common Good?', providing Link members an opportunity to quiz a panel of experts and discuss the merits or otherwise of offsetting.

Link's **Agriculture Working Group** focused much of its advocacy activities on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform process. The group developed a set of briefings for all UK MEPs on those four strands of CAP reform which have the greatest impact on our work: Rural Development Programmes, Cross Compliance, Greening (and in particular Ecological Focus Areas) and High Nature Value Farming. These briefings presented key issues and identified a short set of actions that each MEP could take during CAP negotiating processes. Similarly, our work with MPs concentrated

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on raising awareness of the importance of the EU Budget decision for the environment – thus making the link between EU decision-making processes and their local environment. A letter to all MPs ahead of the EU Budget discussions in the autumn stressed the importance of ensuring value for money for all taxpayers and the need to use public money to deliver public goods (such as biodiversity, clean water, rural landscapes and so on).

Targeting Nature's Recovery, Link's analysis of the Government's progress on the 2010 targets for priority species in England, provided specific analysis of the state of our species, and found that:

- Although populations or ranges were being maintained for 63% of species, 30% are still declining;
- Progress was mixed on targets to increase the numbers or distribution of priority species;
- All targets had been achieved or exceeded for 21% of the species assessed and 46% of species were making at least some progress against all their targets. However, there was no progress against the expansion targets for 25% of the species assessed.

In October 2012, Link also published a response to the final report of the Independent Panel on Forestry, supported by 14 Link members. The response urged the Government to implement the report's recommendations in full, under a clear, achievable timescale, and gave a series of detailed suggestions for how the recommendations should be fulfilled.

4. Promote the delivery of access to nature that is compatible with conservation of wildlife, re-connects society with the environment and enhances human health and welfare

Access to the natural environment continues to be a key element of Link's work. In March, Link members met with Defra officials to discuss 'strategic landscapes and access issues', including Defra's work on people and engagement, National Character Areas, the Red Tape Challenge, Town and Village Greens and barriers to delivery.

In *Nature Check 2012* we introduced ratings against three new Government commitments, to give a more balanced view of Government's progress, including 'We are committed to introducing the right of coastal access under the Marine and Coastal Access Act.'⁶ Link gave this commitment an amber rating, noting that, although Natural England has set out plans for the implementation of the English Coastal Path over the next five to seven years, there is still no timetable for the completion of the path.

Link's work on the Growth and Infrastructure Bill has lobbied for amendments to the clauses related to Town and Village Greens (TVGs), which take a heavy-handed approach to reforming TVG registration and threaten to kill off genuine applications.

Link's response to the Independent Panel on Forestry's final report also looked closely at access issues. Our response noted the detailed requirements, both regulatory and promotional, that would be required in order to increase access to public and private woodlands without damaging ecosystems. For example, the Forestry Commission (FC) would need to continue to prioritise grant aid to woodland creation schemes close to large centres of population, which currently lack such access.

⁶ Benyon R. (2012) *Hansard HC: 24 Jan 2012: Column 144W*, www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120124/text/120124w0001.htm.

5. Raise the UK's commitment to wildlife protection, animal welfare and respect for animals

In January, the Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee (EAC) launched an inquiry into wildlife crime. The **Wildlife Trade Working Group** submitted written evidence to the inquiry calling for, inter alia, long-term funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit and sufficient resources and support for wildlife crime police officers and prosecutors. Link welcomed the Committee's report, published in October, and agreed that the Government has made good progress since the EAC's previous inquiry in 2004, but also pointed out that further advancements are required in a number of areas to ensure proper enforcement of wildlife laws. Link has since written to the Home Office and Defra to reinforce specific recommendations in the Committee's report and outline priorities for action. Link will continue to advocate its recommendations when the Government response and plans for implementation are published in 2013.

The group also used the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in November as an opportunity to push for proper enforcement of wildlife laws. Link wrote to all PCC candidates asking them to pledge to make wildlife crime policing a priority in their constabulary and ensure police forces are properly resourced to carry out their duties in tackling wildlife crime. We achieved a good response rate, with over one-third of elected PCCs signing the pledge. Link will continue its dialogue with elected PCCs in 2013.

Link has also developed productive relationships with law enforcement authorities. In May Link met with Ian Knox (Head of the Metropolitan Police Wildlife Crime Unit) and in December the Wildlife Trade Working Group organised a meeting with members of the CITES Priority Delivery Group, including Nevin Hunter (Head of the National Wildlife Crime Unit) and Alison Clarke (Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency).

As part of our international work, Link has continued to liaise with Defra on CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) issues through attending the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) meetings of conservationists and traders. Link members have consistently flagged priority issues and urged the UK Government to be a strong leader at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, which is taking place in March 2013.

In May, Link hosted a workshop on welfare concerns for wildlife in the UK. The workshop included presentations from invited experts on: wildlife legislation and the Law Commission review; public policy; enforcement issues; and perspectives for particular species. The workshop also provided an opportunity for members to discuss how Link can add value to their work on animal welfare and protection issues. Subsequent to the workshop, Link expanded *Nature Check 2012's* focus on welfare, including the Government's commitments on wild animals in circuses and farm animal welfare, and renaming the 'International responsibilities' section 'Protection of animals.'⁷ This move allowed and the report to give the Coalition Government a rating that more accurately reflects the breadth of Link's members' interests. In addition, Link held two member meetings on animal welfare and we are looking to develop Link's animal welfare work further in 2013.

August saw the publication of a Law Commission consultation paper on the review of Wildlife Law in England and Wales. Link's **Legal Strategy Group** led the process of engaging with and responding to the consultation. The process involved several constructive meetings with the Law Commission and resulted in a comprehensive response document which carried the support of 17 member organisations. It was also a document which enabled Link to develop and communicate its overall vision for the reform of wildlife legislation – a vision that not only supports the consolidation and clarification of existing protection, but also better represents the love of the British people for wildlife, as well as contributing more to achieving the UK's international commitments to halt biodiversity loss; and achieving improved animal welfare. The group awaits the publication of the Law Commission's final recommendations in early 2013 and will engage with the processes that follow to encourage adoption of those recommendations supported by Link members.

⁷ '[We] will seek to introduce primary legislation at the earliest opportunity to... ban travelling circuses from using performing wild animals' (Defra (2012) *Circuses to be banned from using performing wild animals*, www.defra.gov.uk/news/2012/03/01/circus-wild-animal-ban/); 'We will promote high standards of farm animal welfare' (HM Government (2010) *The Coalition: our programme for government*, p.18).

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Link also submitted a response to Defra's pre-consultation on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amendment) Regulations 2004 (which related to the possession of wild bird eggs). And we worked with colleagues in Heritage Alliance to collate views from across our memberships on the potential of, and support for, the introduction of 'Conservation Covenants', a piece of work carried out to inform a scoping project on the subject by the Law Commission.

6. Improve the advocacy of agreed collective messages from the environmental voluntary sector to those who can help us bring about the change we desire

Throughout 2012 Link has continued to present agreed collective messages to those who have the capacity to bring about change - both in Government, and elsewhere. And Link continued to improve the effectiveness of this advocacy. As usual, the secretariat oversaw the production of a large number of collective statements, including 22 consultation responses, 12 e-bulletins, 11 reports and position statements, eight parliamentary briefings and three press releases. Link also sent 23 letters to Ministers, MPs, civil servants and Commissioners, as well as letters to all 216 Police and Crime Commissioner Candidates and 34 letter to water companies. The secretariat also arranged four meetings with Ministers across Defra and the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Land Use Planning Working Group met with Greg Clark MP, then Minister for Planning in February, in advance of the publication of the NPPF; the Marine, Water and Whales Working Groups all met with Richard Benyon MP during the year, and Richard Benyon also spoke at the launch of the *2012 Blueprint for Water Scorecard*. In November, we were also pleased to welcome the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, as keynote speaker at the parliamentary launch of Nature Check 2012. Link also attracted a great deal of interest from delegates with its exhibition stand at the Natural Environment Conference in June.

Link's Director also worked to advocate key messages, and raise the profile of Link and its members, by attending external meetings and workshops. These included: 'Securing the Value of Nature', hosted by Policy Exchange, with speeches by the then Secretary of State, Caroline Spelman MP, and Minister Richard Benyon MP (July); the launch of the Independent Panel on Forestry report (July); and meetings of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity, addressing issues including natural capital (June), planning and the natural environment (July) and a round table discussion with the Minister Richard Benyon MP on the importance of integrating the true value of natural capital and ecosystem services into government processes (December). The Director also coordinated and attended regular meetings with Defra's Director and Deputy Director of the triennial review of Natural England and the Environment Agency, and assisted Defra in organising its stakeholder workshop in October, attended by Link and a large number of its members.

In early 2013, the Director also attended a dinner meeting with Paul Leinster (Chief Executive) and Lord Chris Smith (Chairman) at the Environment Agency, and with Link's new Chair, Victoria Chester, also attended a lunch meeting with Dave Webster (Chief Executive) and Poul Christiansen (Chairman) at Natural England.

We have met with a host of officials from Defra, Natural England, the Environment Agency, Ofwat, the Marine Management Organisation and others, including Richard MacDonald, chair of the Farming Regulation Task Force. Members of the Legal Strategy group met with Keith Vincent (Lawyer, Public Law team) from the Law Commission, to discuss the review of wildlife law in advance of submitting Link's response to the consultation on the review, and in March members of the Whales Working Group met with the UK's Commissioner for International Whaling Commission, Nigel Gooding.

In June, the Land Use Planning Working Group met with Clarissa Corbisiero, a Senior Advisor at the Local Government Association (LGA), to discuss the LGA's position on the final NPPF, and their approach to planning practice guidance. The Blueprint was asked to sit on the National Drought Group (NDG), and co-chaired its environmental sub-group. The group also wrote to all the chairs of the new, independent Customer Challenge Groups (CCGs) in each water company, to ask them to consider including environmental NGOs in their groups. The Blueprint has now established positive relationships with many of these chairs, and a number of environmental representatives are now sitting on new CCGs. The Blueprint also engaged with the Institute of Civil Engineers, giving evidence to their State of the Nation report on Water, which supported many of our asks including the need for universal metering.

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In addition to these specific, one-off meetings, Link continues to be represented on a huge variety of forums that take forward work as diverse as the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the development of biodiversity indicators for the UK. Link's Director was also invited to join the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC) NGO Forum. We also sit on a number of international groups; in 2012 Link members were again included in the UK delegation for the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission, and we facilitated the attendance of Link members Buglife at a seminar in The Hague on Natura 2000 sites in the Atlantic Biogeographic region. All five members of the Link team are also variously involved with the new Policy Groups set up by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity, covering issues including: agriculture; planning and local government; marine and urban biodiversity; and natural capital.

The secretariat also sought to maximise its work by assessing the impact of our consultation responses (for example, for the review of the Nitrates Directive and the guidance on article 6(4) for the Habitats Directive) and preparing advocacy strategies for key events and publications, such as the launch of the Blueprint's scorecard, our work on CAP and *Nature Check 2012*. The advocacy strategy for Nature Check included a detailed review of relevant external contexts, barriers and opportunities, target audiences, our detailed advocacy objectives and the delivery plan. This planning paid off with a range of high profile meetings before and after publication, and an excellent launch event.

During October, Link's Director and Policy and Campaigns Coordinator, met with Robin Mortimer (Defra's Director for Sustainable Land Management and Livestock Farming), Mary Creagh MP (Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Defra) and Andrew George MP (Liberal Democrat backbench Defra lead), to discuss *Nature Check 2012*, its recommendations and likely political impact. Link's Director also held meetings to share information and discuss Nature Check with: Dave Webster, CEO of Natural England; Marcus Yeo, CEO of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee; Simon Hodgson, then CEO at the Forestry Commission; and Liz Humphreys, Director of Operations and Compliance at the Marine Management Organisation.

Link's November launch of *Nature Check 2012* brought together over 80 individuals from Link member organisations, parliamentarians, Defra, statutory agencies and other stakeholders. The launch was hosted by Joan Walley MP, the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, who said that it was a 'vital report', because 'its timing is perfect; just before the budget statement.' She also noted the importance of the 'collaborative partnership' represented by the report. In his speech, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, recognised the significance of the report and the role that Link plays in holding the Government to account. He said 'Irrespective of whether I agree with all of the conclusions of the 2012 Nature Check report, the report has an important role to play in the continuing debate on how we best conserve and enhance the natural environment... It is crucial that we continue to work together, to find better ways of doing things, to add value to each other's efforts and to support each other in this shared agenda.'⁸

Severe flooding just before and after the launch of Nature Check, meant that the report did not receive the level of media coverage we felt it deserved. Coverage included reference in The Guardian and on Sky News and BBC Breakfast News. However, our messaging and coverage was supported by a public poll that we commissioned from ComRes, whose headline findings were that just 17% of people polled agreed that the Government is the "greenest government ever", as pledged by Prime Minister David Cameron when he came to power in 2010. This is despite 81% of people polled wanting to see the natural environment and its wildlife protected at all costs.

Link also worked hard – with welcome support from our members' press teams – to gain media coverage for the *2012 Blueprint for Water Scorecard* launch. The *Scorecard* was reported in four radio programmes on the day of the launch, including the Today programme. It was also covered online by the Telegraph, the BBC, Sky News and by five specialist online media websites.

Link also engaged closely with the Triennial Review of Natural England and the Environment Agency during 2012. Link's Director liaised with Defra's Triennial Review Team early in the year and ensured that Link and its member organisations were involved in meetings and workshops convened by Defra.

⁸ Owen Paterson (2012) *Owen Paterson's speech at the Wildlife and Countryside Link event*, <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2012/11/28/speech-wildlife-and-countryside-link/>.

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Link also wrote to the Secretary of State to outline the key tests against which we would assess the success of the review, to which he responded by thanking Link for its 'constructive engagement in the process so far'. The review was launched formally in December and Link worked with members in early 2013 to develop a response to the consultation. The response, submitted in February 2013, was supported by 23 Link members and partner organisations.

7. Add value to the work of members by facilitating consensus on policies and providing support in the production of joint positions on a wide range of issues

Link continued to work to facilitate consensus amongst members on a huge range of issues within its working groups, as well as developing new areas – such as our Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) work – where there is an appetite for joint working amongst members. As ever, Link also worked on a number of difficult issues where agreement was harder to find. In 2012, these issues included the position on the Monaco resolution to the IWC, our position on planning policy in Nature Check and – as in 2011 – forestry.

In February 2012, Link's Blueprint for Water coalition held a one-day workshop specifically to look at ways of working, using an external facilitator. The group used spectrum lines and SWOT analyses to look at how the group functions, what its priorities are going forward and how these can best be achieved, under the headings of 'new themes for the Blueprint: reframe/ rewrite/ recast', 'putting wildlife back in the Blueprint', and 'outreach.'

Link's Policy Directors group met in February 2012, to discuss the context and options for *Nature Check 2012*, action planning for Link advocacy and 'Finding Frames for Nature', a research project that is looking into how 'larger than self' issues – such as environmental degradation – can be disempowering. The useful discussion on Nature Check looked at how successful the 2011 report had been and how success can be measured. Policy directors noted that the Nature Check 2012 report should look to focus on core themes, such as deregulation, that run across our ability to act on a host of environmental, access and welfare issues. Link's chairs and vice chairs of working groups also met in July to share information and discuss current policy issues and opportunities for cross-working.

Link has continued to operate a web-based timetable of consultations in order to selectively respond in a timely manner. Consultation responses are routinely followed up with meetings with the appropriate consulting department or agency and the Secretariat encourages joint work on UK-level policies of mutual interest between Sister Links' groups in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The four Sister Links share the same mission and aims to great extent, and for this reason we regularly exchange information and views on a range of policy and operational work. The Links secretariats are in regular contact through teleconference and email. In 2012, specific teleconferences were convened. In addition, the Link Directors held three teleconferences and three of the four met in Belfast in September. These discussions, along with communications throughout the year, explored issues including: membership; funding and fundraising; human resources; strategic reviews; triennial reviews and the single body in Wales; approaches to forward planning with the networks; and relationships with Governments across the devolved UK.

The Links continued to work jointly on issues where a UK approach is relevant. Marine conservation is an obvious area, with all four countries currently in receipt of charitable trust support (from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust) for a cross-UK marine project. A Joint Links response was submitted to the consultation on Defra's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) in June. In December, Link's Director and Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator also joined sister Links and other grant-holders at a marine project meeting with IMM Consultants, working on behalf of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, to exchange information on progress and future plans. The Links have also liaised over making applications for funding for phase three of the marine project, which we hope will enable our marine conservation work to continue through to 2016.

On other policy areas, Joint Links responded to the Water Framework Directive UK Technical Advisory Group (UKTAG) consultation on environmental standards in June, and a Joint Links briefing for MEPs on the CAP was published in October. In addition, Scotlink and Link's Agriculture Working Groups liaised in autumn 2012 over tactics on CAP reform.

The Links regularly include reports on the sister Links' work in their regular information bulletins to members so that relevant intelligence, including parliamentary information, is shared among the networks. The biennial Joint Links conference was held in Belfast in September, hosted by our colleagues in Northern Ireland Environment Link. The two-day event focused on *Valuing the Environment*. All five Link staff attended, contributing to workshops on: Measures of Societal Success; Working in a Devolved UK; CAP Reform; and the Marine Environment. The conference provided an excellent opportunity for the informal networking which develops and maintains productive relationships, and delegates were also treated to a behind the scenes tour of the Parliament Buildings at Stormont and a boat tour of Strangford Lough. We are grateful to WWF for providing a grant to support Joint Links activities in 2012.

Link has provided secretariat support to each of our eight working groups and convened at least two meetings of every group in 2012, involving at least four of its members.

Link also sought collaborative partnerships and new members to help strengthen and broaden consensus among NGOs. In 2012 we formed and maintained collaborative partnerships with the Angling Trust, Waterwise and Compassion in World Farming. The World Society for the Protection of Animals and the Freshwater Biological Association also joined as full members in 2012, along with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, MARINElife and the Zoological Society of London, who joined as Associate members.

8. Provide a safe forum for members to exchange information, and develop and promote action that could effect positive change

Throughout 2012 Link maintained a watching brief on a broad range of environmental, access and recreation, and animal welfare issues that affect the delivery of Link's strategic objectives. We provided opportunities for members to explore new areas of policy, or areas of policy where consensus has not been forthcoming in the past.

To provide members with appropriate, accurate and timely information, all responses to Link letters were circulated to members within one week of receipt. The Secretariat ensured Link's protocols and procedures were followed, specifically around electronic communications and confidentiality, and we regularly reviewed and updated our mailing lists and databases of all Link contacts.

We maintained three internal governance-related mailing lists and three mini campaign sites on Link's website. Our monthly e-bulletin was extended to both members and non-member subscribers, as part of our strategy to inform those in the wider sector.

9. Maintain a high standard of service whilst developing the Secretariat's capacity to meet the needs of the membership

The Secretariat successfully maintained a high level of service in 2012, despite a number of staffing changes and additions to agreed work plans (e.g. the response to the Independent Panel on Forestry and the new Task and Finish Group addressing the review of the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives). In July, Link upgraded its IT system. Staff are now able to work remotely, providing greater efficiency and flexibility not only on a day to day basis, but also as part of Link's Olympic contingency planning. A number of other measures were introduced in 2012 to improve efficiency, including out-sourcing of pay roll functions. Annual staff appraisals and day-to-day feedback from the membership suggests that the Secretariat is highly valued and recognised as approachable, effective and highly professional.

Link took the opportunity to reconfigure its personnel early in the year, following a member of staff commencing maternity leave. From March, Link employed three full time staff and two part time staff. We worked with our members and donors to ensure receipt of funds to projected levels and a high priority continued to be given to staff training, with the budget being retained at previous levels. A range of courses were attended throughout the year on subjects including: parliamentary process; European policy and advocacy; marine conservation and financial management. The Director convened weekly team meetings to discuss policy and operational matters, and maintained a regular schedule of staff one-to-ones and appraisal procedures.

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Link continues to offer volunteering opportunities to people with a keen interest in Link issues. We maintain liaison with University College London and Secretariat staff delivered Link's annual lecture to students of the Masters in Conservation degree in December. We retain a pool of at least two volunteers at any one time and provide opportunities for volunteers to undertake specific projects aligned to their interests and expertise.

This year our volunteers worked on areas including: media monitoring; external communications; Link's annual member audit; and research related to Link's strategic review. Volunteers were given the opportunity to contribute to Link's monthly e-bulletins and to help with various Link meetings including the AGM and strategic review workshop. Several volunteers also provided support at the Govtoday Natural Environment 2012 conference in June where Link had an exhibition stand. In addition, the Link Secretariat invited its regular volunteers to become involved in the activities of our working groups by supporting meetings, gathering information on current consultations and undertaking research for specific projects such as Nature Check 2012.

A review of the members' subscription structure was conducted in 2011 along with an examination of subscription rates. The review resulted in two key resolutions being put to the AGM in December of that year: that, following a two-year freeze on subscriptions, rates be increased by 2% in 2012; and that a new subscription structure be introduced in 2013. Both resolutions were approved by Link members and Link has introduced the new subscription structure in 2013.

Link's Board of Trustees met four times during 2012, including its annual away day meeting in June. Trustees discussed progress with the review of its operational strategy, forthcoming advocacy plans and developments in the political arena concerning the conservation agenda and our key policy areas. We also carried out a horizon scan of future policy areas, to prepare for the 2012 work plan, and reviewed Link's half-yearly accounts. The Trustees also set up the Finance and Resources Sub Committee in 2012, tasked with managing the financial governance of Link and making recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Link thanks the following for their financial support in 2012: the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; Tubney Charitable Trust; Greenpeace; and WWF, along with all our members and partner organisations.

Link Personnel

In January 2012, Sam Bickerstaff, our Information and Office Coordinator (IOC), left Link and we welcomed Louise Hartley in taking up the IOC role. Louise also provides secretariat support to the Wildlife Trade Working Group and has supported policy work on areas including animal welfare and forestry. In January, Fiona Llewellyn, who was covering Jo Fisher's maternity leave as Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator (MPCC) took up a role with ZSL and, following Jo's decision not to return to Link after her maternity leave, we were pleased to welcome John Sadler as the new MPCC in March.

Kirsten Loveday, Link's full-time Policy and Campaigns Coordinator, commenced her maternity leave in April 2012, with Kate Hand taking over the full time PCC role and Julie Middleton joining in March to cover the part-time PCC role. And in September, Jodie Bettis confirmed her decision not to return to Link after maternity leave and Dr Elaine King was confirmed as the permanent Director in October.

Financial Review

The 2012 accounts show net outgoing resources of £48,803 for the year compared to £4,916 in 2011. The unrestricted reserves at 31 December 2012 amount to £91,010 and are equivalent to approximately 6 months' total unrestricted expenditure.

Reserves Policy

Wildlife and Countryside Link shall maintain reserves equivalent to six months' operating costs. These funds shall be unrestricted and therefore available to fund all aspects of Link's operations in the event that they should be required. These reserves shall allow Link to plan against future uncertainties.

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The target level for reserves shall be set at that required for six months operation of the organisation so that, should Link encounter financial difficulty, it may continue to provide its members with services at the same level for six months, thus giving members ample warning should the financial situation deteriorate further. It is felt that this is an appropriate amount of time for a small organisation such as Link, as it is likely that any additional or emergency funding would take some months to secure.

The reserve funds shall help to meet working capital requirements to cover Link's normal cash-flow operations throughout the year, and is reviewed on a regular basis. In 2012 Link's reserves were held in The Co-operative Bank and experienced no loss during the year.

Risk review

The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the Trustees, have been reviewed and systems established to mitigate those risks. In June 2012 the Management Committee updated the approved register of risks which will be reviewed regularly as part of the charity's risk management strategy.

Members of the Management Committee

Members of the Management Committee, who are Directors for the purpose of Company Law and Trustees for the purpose of Charity Law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report, are set out on Page 2.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Independent Examiners

A resolution to confirm the appointment Simon Erskine of MHA Macintyre Hudson as independent examiner to the organisation was passed at the Annual General Meeting in December 2012 and will again be proposed at the next Annual General Meeting.

By order of the Management Committee.

Signed:

Position:

Date:

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

I report on the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2012 set out on pages 21 to 28.

This report is made solely to the Committee, as a body, in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of the Charities Act 2011. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the Committee matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Committee for my independent examination work, for this report, or for the statement I have given below.

Respective responsibilities of Committee members and independent examiner

The Committee members, who are the directors of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the purposes of company law, and the trustees for the purposes of charity law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements. The Committee members consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

Having satisfied myself that the Company is not subject to an audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commissioners under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Company, and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as Committee members concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charitieshave not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Simon Erskine FCA FCIE DChA

MHA MacIntyre Hudson

Chartered Accountants

New Bridge Street House

30 - 34 New Bridge Street

London EC4V 6BJ

Date:

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (incorporating Income and Expenditure Account) For the year ended 31 December 2012

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2012 £	Restricted Funds 2012 £	Total Funds 2012 £	Total Funds 2011 £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Incoming resources from generated funds:					
Voluntary income		24,072	-	24,072	24,126
Grants for core funding		28,000	-	28,000	28,000
Investment income - bank interest		257	-	257	280
Incoming resources from charitable activities:					
Grants for project work	9	-	47,741	47,741	79,928
Subscriptions		89,612	-	89,612	77,865
Rent and service charges receivable		530	-	530	-
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		142,471	47,741	190,212	210,199
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Charitable activities	2	164,942	68,662	233,604	211,952
Governance costs	3	5,411	-	5,411	3,163
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		170,353	68,662	239,015	215,115
Net income/(expenditure) before transfer		(27,882)	(20,921)	(48,803)	(4,916)
Transfers between funds	9	450	(450)	-	-
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources		(27,432)	(21,371)	(48,803)	(4,916)
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD		118,442	49,229	167,671	172,587
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		£ 91,010	£ 27,858	£ 118,868	£ 167,671

The annexed notes form part of these financial statements

BALANCE SHEET
As at 31 December 2012

	Notes	2012	2011
		£	£
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	6	3,558	1,283
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	7	10,533	7,467
Cash at bank and in hand		107,886	210,337
		<u>118,419</u>	<u>217,804</u>
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	8	(3,109)	(51,416)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>115,310</u>	<u>166,388</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>£ 118,868</u>	<u>£ 167,671</u>
FUNDS			
Restricted funds	9	27,858	49,229
General fund (unrestricted)	9	91,010	118,442
		<u>£ 118,868</u>	<u>£ 167,671</u>

For the year ended 31 December 2012 the Company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Directors' responsibilities:

- (i) The members have not required the Company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476;
- (ii) The Directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). They were approved, and authorised for issue, by the Directors on 19 March 2013 and signed on their behalf by:-

VICTORIA CHESTER, Chair

DAVID LIND, Treasurer

The annexed notes form part of these financial statements

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 December 2012

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparation of financial statements

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" published in 2005, applicable accounting standards and the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008).

The effects of events relating to the year ended 31 December 2012 which occurred before the date of approval of the financial statements by the Management Committee has been included in the financial statements to the extent required to show a true and fair view of the state of affairs at 31 December 2012 and the results for the year ended on that date.

Company status

Wildlife and Countryside Link is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

Fund accounting

The General fund comprises the unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objects of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Statutory grants which are given as contributions towards the Charity's core services are treated as unrestricted.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the Charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Subscription income from full and associate member organisations is invoiced on a calendar year basis and is recognised accordingly.

Grants are recognised as income in the income and expenditure account in accordance with the terms attached by the grantor.

Recharged costs are accrued when the associated costs are incurred. Other donations and sundry income are recognised in the income and expenditure account when received.

Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Support costs, which cannot be directly attributed to particular activities, have been apportioned proportionately to the direct staff costs allocated to the activities. Governance costs relate to external examination of the accounts and other professional fees of a strategic nature.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 December 2012

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives as follows:

Furniture/fitings	-	4 years
Office equipment	-	4 years

All fixed assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Operating leases

Rentals applicable to operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities over the period in which the cost is incurred.

2. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES: FACILITATION, CO-ORDINATION & INFORMATION PROVISION

	Unrestricted Funds 2012 £	Restricted Funds 2012 £	Total Funds 2012 £	Total Funds 2011 £
Staff costs	137,790	27,091	164,881	155,272
Other costs	27,152	41,571	68,723	56,680
	<u>£ 164,942</u>	<u>£ 68,662</u>	<u>£ 233,604</u>	<u>£ 211,952</u>

3. GOVERNANCE COSTS

	Unrestricted Funds 2012 £	Restricted Funds 2012 £	Total Funds 2012 £	Total Funds 2011 £
Independent examiner's fees:				
Independent examination	2,400	-	2,400	2,371
Accountancy	-	-	-	600
Legal and professional fees	2,946	-	2,946	-
Other expenses	65	-	65	192
	<u>£ 5,411</u>	<u>£ Nil</u>	<u>£ 5,411</u>	<u>£ 3,163</u>

4. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS

	2012 £	2011 £
Wages and salaries	141,598	134,582
Social security costs	15,030	13,615
Pension costs	8,253	7,075
	<u>£ 164,881</u>	<u>£ 155,272</u>
	<u>Number</u> <u>5</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>5</u>

The average number of employees during the period was:

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 December 2012

In addition to the above, 2 staff members were on maternity leave for part of the year, equating to a FTE of 1.7 (2011: 1 staff member equating to an FTE of 0.7).

No employee received remuneration of more than £39,000 in the year or the previous year.

5. COMMITTEE MEMBERS

During the year, no trustee received any remuneration (2011 - £NIL). 2 trustees received reimbursement of expenses amounting to £50 (2011 - 2 trustees amounting to £194).

6. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Fixture and fittings £	Office equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 January 2012	3,017	17,725	20,742
Additions	-	3,603	3,603
Disposals	-	(4,699)	(4,699)
At 31 December 2012	<u>3,017</u>	<u>16,629</u>	<u>19,646</u>
Depreciation			
At 1 January 2012	1,735	17,724	19,459
Charge for the year	427	901	1,328
At 31 December 2012	<u>2,162</u>	<u>13,926</u>	<u>16,088</u>
Net book value			
At 31 December 2011	£ 1,282	£ 1	£ 1,283
At 31 December 2012	<u>£ 855</u>	<u>£ 2,703</u>	<u>£ 3,558</u>

7. DEBTORS

	2012 £	2011 £
Due within one year		
Accrued income	3,220	-
Prepayments	7,313	6,421
Staff travel loan	-	1,046
	<u>£ 10,533</u>	<u>£ 7,467</u>

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 December 2012

8. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	2012	2011
	£	£
Deferred grant income (see below)	-	47,807
Accruals	3,109	3,609
	£ 3,109	£ 51,416
<u>Deferred grant income</u>		
Balance brought forward	47,807	28,000
Amount released to incoming resources	(47,807)	(28,000)
Amount deferred in the year:	-	47,807
Balance carried forward	£ Nil	£ 47,807

9. STATEMENT OF FUNDS

	Brought Forward	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£	£
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
1. Joint Links	2,000	5,000	(6,550)	(450)	-
2. Beyond the Pillars / Crunch time for CAP	2,421	-	(300)	-	2,121
3. Marine Bill Campaign:					
i. General	272	-	(272)	-	-
ii. MPCC project	43,656	33,807	(45,835)	-	31,628
4. Blueprint for Water	609	8,000	(7,823)	-	786
5. Planning Coalition	289	-	-	-	289
6. Nature Check/ Greenest Government Ever	(18)	-	(7,237)	-	(7,255)
7. Nature CEOs	-	90	(90)	-	-
8. Invasive Non-Native Species	-	550	(261)	-	289
9. Welfare workshop	-	294	(294)	-	-
	£ 49,229	£ 47,741	£ (68,662)	£ (450)	£ 27,858

SUMMARY OF FUNDS

General fund	118,442	142,471	(170,353)	450	91,010
Restricted funds	49,229	47,741	(68,662)	(450)	27,858
	£ 167,671	£ 190,212	£ (239,015)	£ Nil	£ 118,868

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 December 2012

Purposes of restricted funds:

1. Joint Links

The WWF Joint Links project grant allows the four Link organisations in the UK (Wildlife and Countryside Link, Wales Environment Link, Scottish Environment LINK and Northern Ireland Environment Link) to update each other, and collaborate on, work programmes, key priorities, and operational matters, through meetings and conference calls. At the end of 2011, £2,000 was brought forward and a further £5,000 was donated by WWF-UK in 2012. The funds were spent on three conference calls and the Joint Links Biennial Seminar. Hosted by Northern Ireland Environment Link, the seminar looked at a range of issues around valuing the environment and provided an opportunity for participants to share intelligence and discuss how Link members can most effectively deliver their work. Funds remaining after the cost of the seminar were distributed amongst the Joint Links for use in individual Joint Link's core work.

2. FRD Beyond the Pillars / Crunch time for CAP

This project was set up in 2008 to fund the publication and launch of the Farming and Rural Development Working Group's policy perspective on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy entitled 'Beyond the Pillars' and in 2011 the project funded the publication of a report entitled 'Crunch Time for CAP'. At the end of 2011, £2,421 was carried forward into 2012. In 2012 £300 was spent on production costs for a series of Joint Links briefings on CAP reform for MEPs. The remaining £2,121 will be carried forward into 2013.

3. Marine Bill Campaign

i) General

This fund has been in operation since 2005. At the end of 2011, £272 was brought forward into 2012 and was used during the year to cover Marine Working Group project support costs, primarily conference call expenditure. The restricted fund was closed at year end.

ii) Marine Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator (MPCC)

This relates to funding from the Tubney Charitable Trust and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation towards the costs of a full time Marine Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator at Wildlife and Countryside Link. This project fund provides for the salary and all associated expenses of the MPCC post. The full cost recovery principle has been applied to this project and transfers from this fund are made to Link's core fund to cover all associated support costs.

4. Blueprint for Water

The Blueprint for Water project was set up in 2009 to fund the publication and distribution of the Blueprint coalition's third report. £609 was carried forward into 2012 from 2011 and a further £8,000 in member donations was received in 2012 to fund the production and launch of the 2012 Blueprint for Water Scorecard and a Blueprint ways of working workshop. £786 will be carried forward into 2013.

5. Planning Coalition

The Planning Coalition fund was set up in 2010 to cover costs associated with the publication and distribution of the new Greenest Planning Ever Coalition's Vision for the Future of Planning document. £289 was carried forward into 2012. No funds were spent during 2012 and £289 will be brought forward into 2013.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 December 2012

6. *Nature Check / Greenest Government Ever*

The Nature Check / Greenest Government Ever fund was set up in 2011 to cover the costs associated with assessment, reporting and launch of project findings on the Coalition Government's performance on the natural environment, as part of its commitment to be the "greenest Government ever". There was a deficit of £18 at the start of 2012, £7,237 was then spent during the year on Nature Check 2012 production costs. At year end there was a deficit of £7,255. This will be covered in 2013 through member donations.

7. *Nature CEOs*

The Nature CEOs fund was set up in 2012 to cover the costs of a workshop on the future of environmental governance in England, in the context of the Triennial Review of the Environment Agency and Natural England. The workshop cost £90 and was covered by a non-Link member donation. The restricted fund was closed at year end.

8. *Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)*

The INNS project was set up in 2012 to fund a volunteer to lead on Link's Invasive Non-Native Species Task and Finish Group. £550 was received from a Link member during the year and £261 was spent on volunteer expenses in line with Link's volunteer policy (travel and subsistence costs). £289 has been brought forward into 2013.

9. *Welfare workshop*

The Welfare Workshop fund was set up in 2012 to cover the costs of a workshop set up to assess welfare concerns for wildlife in the UK and discuss how to best incorporate welfare work into Link's framework and work plan. The workshop cost £294 and was covered by member donations.

10. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	General Fund £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
Tangible fixed assets	3,558	-	3,558
Net current assets	87,452	27,858	115,310
	<u>£ 91,010</u>	<u>£ 27,858</u>	<u>£ 118,868</u>

11. OTHER FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

At 31 December 2012 the Company had annual commitments under the non-cancellable operating lease on its premises as follows:

	2012 £	2011 £
Operating leases which expire:		
within one year	5,371	-
within two to five years	-	21,483
	<u>5,371</u>	<u>21,483</u>

The cost of operating lease during the year was as follows:

Office lease charges for the year	<u>£ 21,483</u>	<u>£ 21,483</u>
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