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Wildlife and
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Quarterly Report January - March 2002

Headlines

“Cost of Curry reforms small price to pay for a sustainable farming industry,” say Green Groups

Significant assurances gained as Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill passes through the Commons

Quote of the Quarter

“I should like to express my thanks for the hard work of the wider environmental NGO movement, especially through Wildlife and Countryside Links...It would not be right for me not to thank all those many members of environmental organisations and of the public who have lent their support to the Bill....many colleagues will bear testament to the extent of that support, as they have expressed to me their delight at receiving so many letters on the subject...I have to admit that that is the result of the hard work of the NGOs, not my personal chivvying of people in their constituencies”.

John Randell, 15th March 2002, at Third Reading of the Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill

Letter From the Chair

The first quarter of 2002 was very busy for Link and its members. The Curry Commission produced its report on Food and Farming and there was considerable work to do on the Planning Green Paper. Marine wildlife issues continued to be high on the agenda with the Marine Conservation Bill, preparation for the IWC in Shimonoseki and work on bycatch issues. There was concern that the Aggregates Levy would not come into force when some mining companies tried legal action through the Courts. Fortunately they were unsuccessful, and the Levy came into operation in April.

Our new Director, Pippa Langford started at the end of February. Pippa would like to visit all the members this year, to find out more about what we do, and our ideas of how Link works and how we could make it better. During January and most of February Debbie Johnson and Sonia Coventry covered all Link's work between them, and did an excellent job ensuring that all the work carried on, for which we are very grateful.

We have welcomed a new member, Buglife, the invertebrate Conservation Trust. They have quickly involved in Link's work through the response to the Planning Green Paper.

During the second quarter Link's Farming and Rural Development group will be very busy responding to many consultations. The Land Use Planning group will be waiting for the government's planning policy paper and the Wildlife and Trade group will be following up their good work on CITES. The Water Task Force will be preparing for the consultation on the Water Framework Directive that should commence in May.

Our first one off event this year will be “Using Europe for Nature Conservation”, hopefully at the end of May. We are also looking forward to the Access and Common Land events, and hoping to hold these events at interesting venues!

All best wishes

Tony Burton

In the text Link documents are in italics and underlined.

Copies are available by contacting Sonia at the Link office:
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“Bringing together organisations in the UK to protect and enhance wildlife and landscape, and to further the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside.”



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Working Groups

Farming and Rural Development

The Curry Commission on the Future of Farming and Food published its report this quarter. Many of their recommendations are well in line with long-established Link position. Link's farming group especially welcomed the call for increased shifting of funds from the first to the second pillar of the CAP, for a significant increase in modulation at the mid-term review, and for the establishment of a broad and shallow stewardship scheme, accessible to all farmers.

For the first time in the stormy recent history of farming policy, there appears to be a remarkable level of consensus amongst farmers, environmentalists, consumers and the food industry on the way forward for farming. Releasing the appropriate funds is the first and most vital step, and Link is working to share intelligence and formulate common positions on this issue at this critical time. This group has also begun to explore the opportunities with the Agencies for an aligned lobbying and influencing approach.

Link attended a meeting with DEFRA, at which Government set out its approach to taking forward the Policy Commission's recommendations, and looks forward to engaging with development of Government's Strategy for Food and Farming

Activities

Internal Meetings

23/1 - Fund-switching group meeting (5 att from 5 orgs)

5/2 - Full group meeting (14 attendees from 13 organisations)

7/3 - Fund-switching group meeting (9 att from 9 orgs, including EA and EN)

External Meetings

11/3 - Meeting with DEFRA re: Farming and Food Strategy Consultation Process

Outputs

6/2 - Post Policy Commission Report Press Release (16 signatories)

20/2 - Letter to Beckett re: Consultation

Activity Forecast

8/4 - Agri-Environment Review meeting, with Geoff Radley, DEFRA

1/5 - Full Farming Group meeting
Sustainable Agriculture Postcard Campaign

Respond to first phase of Agri-environment Review consultation

Work to influence outcome of the Spending Review

Land-Use Planning

The Land Use Planning group submitted a 15 page response to the Planning Green Paper "Planning: delivering a fundamental change". 17 members signed up to the response. The combined strength of the lobby against many measures in the paper seemed a surprise to government, who indicated that they might rethink some proposals. Link supports the case for reform of the planning system, but wants sustainability to be in the core of the system, in both process and outcomes. Link members were concerned that the proposals lacked a real framework for democratic accountability, at regional, sub regional and local levels. The need for real strategic planning that integrates land use, transport and natural resource planning. This view was at the core of the RCEP report on Environmental Planning that was launched a few days after the closing of consultation on the green paper.

The group also submitted a joint response on Major Infrastructure Projects (MIPs) where proposals could mean that these decisions are taken by parliament.

Work progresses a pace in the next quarter with responses to the Use Classes Order consultation, and awaiting the response to the consultation on the green paper.

PPG9

The group was disappointed to learn that work by DTLR on PPG9 might not occur until at least the end of the year (2002). In addition to this there is a

concern that with the new "lite" PPGs much of the necessary and very useful statutory guidance will be downgraded into appendices or supporting notes where it will not be fully enforced by planners or adhered to by developers. However members feel that this is a debate where the evidence would suggest that a detailed, updated PPG would achieve conservation of nature and be of more use to both planners and developers. The group is currently identifying the key points for a new PPG that will focus work for the next quarter. It is possible that the group will work more closely with English Nature in the future where there is common ground on this issue.

Minerals

With just months to go before the introduction of the Aggregates Levy and Sustainability Fund, there was mounting industry pressure against the Levy, and confusion within Government around the Fund. Link publicly restated its support for the Levy and the Fund, and met with DEFRA and the Countryside Agency to understand more about how the fund will work. Link wants to see priority given under the Sustainability Fund to projects which will reduce our need for and use of primary aggregates, but remains concerned that the emphasis will be on local mitigation work. We look forward to seeing the Levy and Fund come into being in the coming quarter.

Activities

Internal Meetings

17/1 - Full Group Meeting (12 attendees from 9 organisations)

13/2 - Minerals Meeting (3 att from 3 orgs)

1/3 - PPG9 Meeting (7 att from 5 orgs)

5/3 - Full Group Meeting (12 att from 11 orgs)

External Meetings

19/2 - Meeting with CA re: Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund

4/3 - Meeting with DEFRA Waste Strategy Division re: Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund

5/3 - Presentation to Lords All Party Conservation Group

Working Groups

Outputs

15/3 - Letter to Beckett re: Sustainability fund (6 signatories)
18/3 - Response to Planning Green Paper and accompanying Press Release (17 signatories)
20/3 - Press Release re: Aggregates Levy (11 signatories. Achieved coverage in Planning Magazine)
25/3 - Response to Major Infrastructure Projects Green Paper (15 signatories)

Activity Forecast

23/4 – Full Group Meeting
23/5 – PPG9 Group Meeting
June? – DTLR response to PGP consultation

Wildlife and Trade

The Wildlife and Trade Working group met this quarter with DEFRA's Global Wildlife Team, the first liaison meeting in the run up to this Autumn's CITES Convention of Parties in Chile.

The Group continues to work actively on Shark issues. A sub-group are meeting regularly with UK officials to discuss the UK Basking Shark uplisting proposal for the upcoming CoP. Link members actively support a new EC regulation to ban Shark Finning, and lobbied the UK Government to support this.

On whaling issues, Link members continue to share information and intelligence ahead of this year's critical IWC meeting, in Japan next quarter.

Activities

Internal Meetings

28/1 - Full group meeting (6 attendees from 6 organisations)
18/2 - Pre-meet to DEFRA liaison meeting (6 att from 5 orgs)
8/3 - IWC meeting (9 att from 7 orgs)

External Meetings

22/2 - Liaison meeting with DEFRA Global Wildlife Division (7 Link members from 6 orgs +DEFRA)

Output

23/1 - Letter to Brasher re: Cheetah Breeding (3 signatories)
22/3 - Letter to Brasher re: Shark Finning (9 signatories)

Task Forces

Activity Forecast

15/4 Whaling Forum meeting, with Link pre-meet
IWC Scientific and Plenary meetings, in Shimonoseki, Japan, May 2002
Develop guidelines for NGO/Government working on Wildlife and Trade issues

Marine Nature Conservation

John Randall's Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill successfully completed its passage through the Commons this quarter. Link worked to agree common position against Government amendments expected at report. As expected, Governments amendments were introduced which did weaken the bill, not least the reduction of the duty on English Nature and CCW to notify sites to a power. However, some significant Ministerial assurances were gained during the report stage debate, and Meacher made it clear that resources that would be made available for EN to implement the Bill. Baroness Anlay now takes the Bill forward into the Lords and we wish it well.

The Review of Marine Nature Conservation moved forward this quarter, with the establishment of the Regional Seas Pilot Project, in the Irish Sea. Sam Fanshawe, Chair of our Marine Task Force, represents the Joint Link's on the Pilot Steering Group. Meacher made it clear that, should Randall's Marine Bill become law, the RMNC will be key to the development of MSSl criteria - this will place a new level of urgency on outcome of the Review and the Regional Pilot.

The Marine Group has also taken the lead on Link's work on Bycatch issues. The shocking levels of dolphin wash-ups on the South Coast this quarter heightened political and public awareness of this issue. Following a NGO meeting with Morley, Link members came together to clearly set out some next steps and actions for the UK Government, within this country and within Europe.

Together with the Scottish LINK Marine Task Force, we stepped up pressure on the Government to implement the Offshore Regulations of the Habitats and Species Directives this quarter.

Activities

Internal Meetings

14/1 - Full Group meeting (8 attendees from 6 organisations)
11/2 - CEOs meeting re: Marine Bill (12 att from 7 orgs)
6/3 - Full Group Meeting (8 att from 5 orgs)
6/3 - Bycatch/Fisheries meeting (12 att from 7 orgs)
22/3 - Conference Call re: Marine Bill (8 att from 6 orgs)

External Meetings:

16/1 - RMNC Working Group meeting (4 Link Representatives)
14/2 - Meeting with John Randall re: Marine Bill
14/3 - Meeting with John Roberts re: Marine Charter

Outputs:

23/1 Strategic Goals for the Marine Environment (Joint input to RMNC)
8/3 Letter to MPs re: Marine Bill Report Stage/3rd Reading
22/3 Letter to Margaret Beckett/Ross Finnie re: Darwin Mounds and implementation of the Offshore Habitats and Species Regs (12 signatories, joint with Scottish LINK

Activity Forecast:

Marine Bill Lords Stages (Second Reading likely to be 15/5)
RMNC meeting
Establishment of Regional Seas pilot project team
10/4 - Bycatch meeting, Chippenham
17/5 - Full Marine Group meeting, including Marine Charter Campaign planning
Stewardship Report published early May
End May - Meeting with John Roberts re: Stewardship Report/Marine Charter

Task Forces

Water Policy and Legislation

Link has begun to work with the Government, Agencies and the Water Industry on joint customer research ahead of the AMP4 process.

The group met once this quarter to discuss developments in the Water Framework Directive and other water policy issues.

Activities

Internal Meeting:

13/2 - Internal Meeting (6 attendees from 4 organisations)

Activity Forecast:

SEPA led consultation into Annexes 2 and 5 of the Water Framework Directive, joint with Scottish Link Freshwater Task Force

Sustainable Energy

Link continued to provide Secretariat Services to this joint Link/Climate Action Network UK group, on behalf of CAN UK.

The long-awaited PIU Energy Review was published in February. In general, many of the recommendations in the report, such as increasing the renewables target to 20% by 2020, are welcome. A White Paper is expected in the Autumn.

The group submitted some early thoughts to DTLR regarding the anticipated revision of PPG22, advocating the removal of energy from incineration of waste from the guidance, in line with the Renewables Obligation.

The group has begun to explore the potential for a generic Green Energy campaign, to raise general public awareness of the need for green energy and the ease of switching to green tariffs. The group met with the Energy Savings Trust to discuss the potential for joint working on this issue.

Activities

Internal Meetings

21/1 Internal Meeting (7 attendees from 6 organisations)

External Meetings

27/3 Meeting with Energy Savings Trust (7 att from 6 orgs)

Outputs:

8/2 - Letter to DTLR re: PPG22 (7 signatories)

Activity Forecast:

Mid-May - meeting tbc

Response to Government Consultation on PIU report recommendations

Further development of the Green Energy campaign idea.

Scottish Link

Tracking Land Reform (the Access part) Bill through Holyrood; Starting to prepare for Water Environment legislation at Holyrood from Spring. Continuing to input to Holyrood's rolling enquiry into aquaculture. Pressing for Nature of Scotland legislation before end of this parliamentary term.

Work relating to Scotland's role and participation in the WSSD in August 2002; including a conference; Managing to be Sustainable; plus engagement with Executive to secure funding and support for a civic delegation; also planning a report card for publication in the summer on Scotland's progress since Rio on key Rio commitments.

eNGOs have welcomed First Minister's recent speech on environment, SD and social justice. Have had recent contact with Scottish Ministers on SD, Access issues. Further dialogue hoped for on climate, forestry, nature and cultural heritage issues.

Developing dialogue with SNH and others on the longer term government strategy for outdoor recreation and landscape.

Sister Links

Northern Ireland Link

Members have been working on the consultation document 'Modernising the Planning Process' and have just begun working with the Sustainable Northern Ireland Programme with regards the Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Link have secured funding from the Community Fund to fund two posts - commencing 1 April 2002 and lasting 3 years - to look at Rural community Environmental Capacity Building.

Environmental Education Forum has just held its Spring Conference and is now preparing for its major conference at end of May looking at Education for Sustainable Development.

Welsh Link

Planning - Welsh consultation on reform of Planning system began at end of January. WWCL members generally felt had a much better deal than their English counterparts, producing a broadly supportive response to the Welsh consultation.

Agriculture - the Assembly has established three working groups looking at : CAP Reform, Tir Mynydd (HLCA/SAPS) and Agri-environment schemes, with a Steering Group co-ordinating matters. WWCL has a representative on each of these groups, and seems generally to be making effective contributions to the discussions. Members of the WWCL Agriculture group recently met with the Agriculture Minister to discuss options for a broad and shallow agri-environment scheme, pressing the case for using higher modulation rates to fund it.

Wales and World Sustainable Development Conference - organised jointly by WWF Cymru, Oxfam and the Wales Assembly Government (WAG) as part of Wales' contribution to the August World Summit. The First Minister announced he and other members of the WAG will be going to J'burg to represent Wales, and WWCL ran a successful workshop on "Globalisation".

Organisational Development

New staff: Pippa Langford started as Link's new Director on 25th February. Pippa has taken on the Land Use Planning Group, the PPG9 sub group and the Water Task Force. She is keen to support Debbie and all the working groups and Task Forces, so is coming to many of the meetings. Pippa has also set the target to visit all the members during the year.

One of the challenges for Link is funding, and Pippa presented a short discussion paper to the Management Committee about fund raising approaches and sources. Link wants to offer the best service to its members, so we are exploring new funding sources.

Welcome new volunteer and intern: Link has a new volunteer Anna Scott who is completing her MSc in Conservation at UCL. Anna is helping keep some of our databases up-to-date, and researching the other wildlife and countryside organisations which are not yet members of Link, and who may benefit from joining. Anna is also studying the passage of the Marine Conservation Bill for her MSc dissertation.

We have an Intern, Amy Chulik, from Ohio. Amy is a communications and journalism graduate. She wants to know more about the UK and Europe, how are government works and how environmental groups influence the process. She has been supporting Debbie with Marine issues, especially with the meetings leading up to the IWC. Amy has been compiling a database about MPs so that we can log useful information about them and she has been working on the "Using Europe for Nature Conservation" event which will be in late May.

Update about CAN

Unfortunately CAN has not received an EAF grant or money from Esmee Fairburn. There will be a CAN board meeting in May to look at the way forward for the network. If anyone has any funds or ideas please get in touch.

Members only section of website

We would like to develop the members only section of the website so that it is of real use. Discussion is currently underway as to how this could work, possibly as discussion fora, perhaps on cross cutting issues as well as quite focused policy work. We are also considering the use of links within e mails rather than using many attachments, this may speed up your incoming emails, and reduce the space used on your hard drives for storing all the files. Any additional suggestions are very welcome. Our volunteer Anna may shortly contact you to get some feedback about the website, we want to make it better!

Working Groups

Farming and Rural Development

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Sec: Debbie Johnson

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Task Forces

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Bycatch: Ali Ross

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Sec: Debbie Johnson

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Sustainable Energy / CAN-UK

Chair: Russel Marsh
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Sec: Debbie Johnson

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One Off Initiatives

Access to the Countryside

Using Europe to Further Nature Conservation in the UK

Future of Commonland in England and Wales

Sec Pippa Langford

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