

E-bulletin January 2013

Welcome to Link's first e-bulletin of 2013. See below for this month's top stories and updates from each of our working groups. If you would like to subscribe to our e-bulletin or submit news items, please contact [Louise](#).



Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy

Link has [produced an analysis](#) of the [Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain](#), which is due for review this year. The key messages Link put forward are: the significant role NGOs play in controlling INNS; the success of the GB Strategy and Secretariat so far; the need for a thorough review of the Strategy as soon as possible; and the need for a strategic delivery plan.

On 22 January, the INNS Task and Finish Group held a roundtable with the Minister for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs, Richard Benyon MP, to discuss Link's analysis as well as recommendations for taking forward this area of policy. The meeting was very constructive and has laid the foundations for further work on INNS.

Response to the ban of sale of five aquatic plants

On 29 January the Government announced a UK ban on the sale of five of the most invasive non-native aquatic plants in response to the environmental problems caused by these species in the freshwater environment. The INNS Task and Finish Group has produced a [response](#) welcoming the ban but expressing concern that the species can continue to be sold for another year.

Growth and Infrastructure Bill

Link has [produced a briefing](#) on the Growth and Infrastructure Bill, in advance of the second reading of the Bill in the House of Lords. This well-received briefing makes a series of recommendations including the removal of clauses 1, 8, 14 and 24. Link will continue to take close interest in proceedings while the Bill is at committee stage, particularly on the removal of clause 8.

Defra meeting on MCZs

Link's Marine Working Group met with Nigel Gooding at Defra on 28 January to discuss [the Government's proposals for Marine Conservation Zone \(MCZ\) designation](#) this year. Link questioned Defra closely on its plans to create an ecologically coherent network of sites in UK waters, the timetable for future tranches of MCZs, the protection of highly mobile species and the Government's use of socio-economic data.

Triennial Review

This month Link has worked with members to finalise its response to Defra's Triennial Review of Natural England and the Environment Agency. The deadline for responses is 4 February.

Congratulations from all at Link to Martin Spray, Chief Executive at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, for being awarded a CBE for services to wildlife conservation.



Rural Development Programmes

The current focus for the Agriculture Working Group is to input into the processes within Defra relating to the design of the next Rural Development Programme for England. Link members have a great deal of experience and understanding of agri- environment schemes and we are working to bring these together into a set of constructive suggestions for Defra's consideration ahead of the formal consultation period on the RDPE in the Spring.

Uplands

A meeting with Natural England (NE) to discuss upland policy was scheduled for 31 January but has been postponed to a date closer to the publication of NE's review of evidence on uplands delivery, which is expected in late March.



Working group meeting

On 14 February the Biodiversity Working Group will be meeting to discuss; work planning for 2013; developments on biodiversity offsetting; EU funding for biodiversity and the forthcoming Terrestrial Biodiversity Group meeting.

Meeting with Natural England

A meeting with Natural England has also been scheduled for February / March to discuss the monitoring and surveillance strategy to support *Biodiversity 2020*.

APPG Biodiversity

Link [responded](#) to the APPG's inquiry into the Natural Environment White Paper and *Biodiversity 2020* at the end December 2012. We took the opportunity to emphasise our concerns around profile and barriers to delivery for these strategies, as laid out in *Nature Check 2012*. The response calls for: cross-government commitment to delivery; better and clearer connections between national priorities and local delivery; prioritisation of species recovery and an effective funding plan for biodiversity.



Habitats and Birds

Simplification of guidance

Link will be responding to the [Defra consultation](#) on draft overarching guidance for the Habitats Directive and the stocktake of existing guidance by the 5 February deadline.



Invasive Non-Native Species

INNS Policy Group in Parliament

In an effort to raise the political profile of INNS, Link wrote to Barry Gardiner MP, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Biodiversity, to recommend that a Policy Group be set up within the APPG Biodiversity group. The group has now been set up and will act as a forum for stakeholders and MPs to share information and concerns on INNS issues.

Letter to Commissioner Potočník

In order to show our support for a European Directive on Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Link wrote to Commissioner Potočník, the European Commissioner for the Environment, to show the strong support for an EU Directive on IAS from UK NGOs. We received a reply from the Commissioner thanking us for our engagement and support and reassuring us that they are working on a dedicated legislative instrument to tackle IAS at an EU level in order to help achieve targets set under the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020.

Future of the group

Heidi Richardson, Link's intern working on INNS, has now completed her three month's work. Heidi has been extremely productive and has worked with the INNS Task and Finish Group to make significant progress on the issue. We would like to thank Heidi for all her hard work. Link is now seeking further funding to ensure that the group can continue its work, especially around development of the EU Directive and review of the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain.



Land Use Planning

Meeting with Baroness Hanham

On 23 January Link met with Baroness Hanham, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who is in charge of guiding the Growth and Infrastructure Bill through the House of Lords. Discussions focussed on clauses 1, 8, 13, 14 and 24 of the Bill.

Working Group meeting

The Land Use Planning Working Group met on 31 January to discuss work planning for 2013, the review of planning guidance and the Growth and Infrastructure Bill. Rachel Hoskin from Natural England also joined the meeting as an opportunity to discuss shared interests.

Environmental Impact Assessment Directive review

On 11 January the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) held a stakeholder meeting on the EIA Directive Review which Paul Miner (CPRE) attended on behalf of Link. At the meeting they discussed DCLG's position on the review; NGOs concerns around the statements that DCLG have made and details around screening, scoping, use of experts and monitoring. Discussions also focussed on the likely timetable within Europe for the review and any subsequent amendments to the Directive.

Taylor review

The [External Review of Government Planning Practice Guidance](#) was published on 21 December. Link will be responding to the review by the 15 February deadline.



Triennial Review Marine Workshop

Link attended a [Triennial Review](#) Marine Workshop at Defra on 16 January. Link gave its views on what currently works well in the delivery of the marine functions of the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and where opportunities exist for improvement.

Meeting with the Minister

Link will be meeting with Richard Benyon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Natural Environment, on 27 February to discuss the Government's proposals for MCZ designation.



Draft Water Bill

The Blueprint for Water held a teleconference on 16 January to discuss updates on the Water Bill and the Blueprint's Water Bill strategy. The implications of upstream competition and the potential to include the positive elements of the Water White Paper in the Bill, for example enabling powers for abstraction reform, were discussed. Following evidence sessions held by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee at the end of last year, in which the Blueprint gave evidence, we are now awaiting publication of a report on the enquiry.

Meetings with water companies

On 30 January Link held a meeting with Southern Water to discuss a multi-agency coalition approach to surface water drainage and catchment management. Link will also be meeting with Yorkshire Water on 7 February to discuss their company strategy, NGOs' priorities and areas for collaboration.

Consultations

Link will be responding to the Defra consultation on [urban diffuse water pollution](#) and the UK Technical Advisory Group consultation on [phosphorus and biological standards](#) in February.



Whales

Greenland's catch limits

Link wrote to Defra in January regarding Greenland's intention to issue itself with unilateral catch limits for large whales. Link expressed concern that Greenland (an individual territory, represented at [the International Whaling Commission \(IWC\)](#) through Denmark) is bypassing the IWC entirely in setting catch limits. Link pointed out that setting catch limits which have been rejected by the relevant international body would establish a dangerous precedent. Link also urged the UK Government to make sure that the position of the EU on this issue is made known to all IWC parties as soon as possible.

Defra Meeting in February

Link's Whales Working Group will be meeting with Defra officials on 4 February to discuss a range of issues including Japan, Norway and Iceland's whaling programmes, the Sakhalin Energy developments, Greenland's Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling quota and the IWC Scientific Committee.



Wildlife Trade

Working Group meeting

On 11 February the Wildlife Trade Working Group will be holding a meeting to discuss work planning for 2013, the forthcoming JLG meeting and the recently announced National Wildlife Crime Unit funding for 2013/2014.

Joint NGO Liaison Group meeting

A Link representative will be attending the meeting of the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) on 14 February to discuss preparations for the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES which will take place in Thailand in March 2013.

