

E-bulletin: January 2012

Welcome to Link's first e-bulletin of 2012. Please see below for January'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](#).

The Link secretariat team hit the ground running after the Christmas break, with a packed timetable of meetings and consultations requiring a Link response. At the same time, we said goodbye to Sam Bickerstaff, our Information and Office Coordinator, and welcomed her successor, Louise Hartley.



Words on the Water White Paper

On 12 January, Link's [Blueprint for Water Coalition](#) met with the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, to discuss the Water White Paper (WWP) published in December 2011.

The meeting was very productive and provided an opportunity for the coalition to express that while the WWP has good vision, it is lacking in practical measures. This is based on the long timescales for the water abstraction regime reform, the uncertainty surrounding the Periodic Review of Water Pricing in 2014 (PR14), lack of encouragement for metering uptake and the complacency on point source pollution. The coalition also highlighted that water efficiency and the chemical status of water bodies were left largely untouched in the WWP.

The Minister welcomed closer working with the coalition, particularly on abstraction reform and the wise-use/river campaign which Defra intends to launch shortly. The Minister acknowledged that the WWP is just that, a paper, and it is the implementation that will be judged.

Habitats and Birds Regulations

In December 2011 Link set up a [new Task and Finish group](#) to respond to the review of the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives. The group are in the process of compiling a response for Defra.

Link has also successfully secured a place on the wider stakeholder forum. The group involves 19 Link members and is chaired by Kate Jennings (RSPB), and vice-chaired by Carol Day (WWF-UK).

Link gives oral evidence on the NEWP

Paul Wilkinson, Head of Living Landscapes at The Wildlife Trusts, gave oral evidence on behalf of Link to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee regarding the implementation of the [Natural Environment White Paper](#).

The evidence session took place on 18 January and was chaired by Anne McIntosh MP. Also giving evidence were Ben Stafford (Campaign to Protect Rural England), Simon Pryor (National Trust) and Rodney Whittaker (The Ramblers).

The focus of the session was on the over-emphasis of Government payments for ecosystem services and the fact that there is no obvious funding strategy or timetable. There is a clear funding gap between what is set out in the White Paper and the funding available to make it a reality.

In terms of implementation, concern was raised over a lack of an integrated delivery plan due to the cross-departmental nature of the White Paper. One positive step which was noted has been the launch of the Nature Improvement Areas competition.

Watch the full session [here](#).

Meeting of Link Policy Directors

The Policy Directors' group brings together senior staff from across Link's membership to provide high-level strategic advice to Link. The next meeting will take place from 11am-1.30pm on Thursday 9 February, at Rethink, 15th Floor of 89, Albert Embankment.

An agenda will be circulated to attendees in advance. If you would like to attend and have not yet confirmed your place, please contact [Louise](#) by Monday 6 February.

Linking up

In autumn 2012 the four Sister Link organisations will once again be coming together to hold the biennial [Joint Links](#) Seminar. A questionnaire will be circulated shortly to find out members' preferences on theme and location.

Our last seminar, which took place in Chester in 2010, saw members from across all four Links come together, share knowledge and discuss the changing political landscape and ongoing effects of the recession. The seminar also provided a platform for our Task Forces and Working Groups to share experience and identify topics for future joint work.

We would like to thank the WWF who have continued to help fund the majority of the costs of the [Joint Links](#) Seminar series.

To register your interest in this event or ask any questions please email [Louise](#).

New Link baby!

Congratulations to Link's Director, Jodie Bettis and her husband Greg, who welcomed their new baby boy, Elliott James Cooper, into the world on 20 January. We look forward to meeting the new arrival soon!



Crunch time for CAP

The Joint Links' report - [Crunch Time for CAP](#) - produced by Wildlife and Countryside Link and our sister Links in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, has continued to receive encouraging feedback since its Westminster launch in November. For example, on 11 January, Link met with Kerry McCarthy MP and Simon Hart MP to discuss the report in more detail. These were both very positive meetings and we will continue to liaise with them and other Parliamentarians in the lead up to CAP reform.

Link Agriculture Working Group meeting

This month the Agriculture Working Group (AWG) met on 24 January to discuss 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](#). The deadline for responses is 5 March. Link will be submitting a response to this consultation based on the Joint Links Crunch Time for CAP report.

Agri-Environment Stakeholder Group

The Agri-Environment Stakeholder Group (AESG) held a workshop on Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) on 25 January. The final list of 12 NIAs is yet to be confirmed but it was agreed that NIAs will be provided with funding for three years starting 1 April 2012. The next meeting of the AESG is on 20 March, by which time the list of NIAs will be complete and the group can discuss NIA process in more detail.



All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity

The [All Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\) on Biodiversity](#) met on 16 January to examine 'The Economics of Biodiversity and the Valuation of Natural Capital'. Discussions were focused around ecosystem services and how natural capital can be integrated into national accounting. The keynote speakers were Lord Deben, President of GLOBE International and Pavan Sukhdev, author of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB). Presentations were also given by Natural England Vice Chair and Environment Bank Founder David Hill; Tim Jenkins from the New Economics Foundation; Roddy Fairley from Scottish Natural Heritage and Giles Atkinson from London School of Economics.

Link Biodiversity Working Group meeting

Following the APPG on Biodiversity, Link's Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) met to discuss work planning for 2012. This included the Government's [Biodiversity2020](#) delivery plan and Link's critique of the plan. Link will be meeting with Defra in February to highlight which actions in the delivery plan should be prioritised. In addition, a meeting with Natural England has also been scheduled in February, to discuss the definition of habitats and species outcomes as stated in [Biodiversity2020](#).

Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

The Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG), part of the Governance structure for the delivery of [Biodiversity2020](#), held a meeting on 24 January, chaired by Natural England. Nicola Hutchinson, Chair of the BWG, represented Link and discussed Link's options as delivery partners in the

[Biodiversity2020](#) implementation plan. Discussion also included the TBG work plan. The next TBG meeting is scheduled for 23 February. For more information regarding TBG please contact [Kirsten](#).

Biodiversity Indicators

It was announced at the UK Biodiversity Indicator Steering Group meeting on 6 December that the next publication date for UK indicators will be 22 May. The group now has a new Chair, Andy Scott, Science Director for the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

People Engagement Group

Following Link's invitation to join the People Engagement Group (PEG) of Biodiversity 2020 in December 2011, Heather McFarlane at the Bat Conservation Trust, has kindly agreed to represent Link on this group. The first PEG meeting is scheduled to take place on 9 February.



Link has established a Task and Finish Group looking at the [review of the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Regulations in England](#). The group involves 19 Link members and is chaired by Kate Jennings (RSPB), and vice-chaired by Carol Day (WWF-UK). Kate Hand and Kirsten Loveday are providing secretariat support.

Terms of Reference

The group's Terms of Reference has three objectives:

- Submitting a response to Defra
- Seeking to secure a place for a species specialist on Defra's High Level Advisory Group
- Working with Natural England to support good quality case studies.

Link's response has now been submitted. [Click here](#) to view the paper.

Internal group meetings

The group has held two meetings (12 and 24 January) to discuss Link's [submission to the review](#), including potential case studies to be used in the submission. Four Link members have secured places on Defra's High Level Advisory Group, which met on 16 January, and Link has secured a place on the wider stakeholder forum which met on 18 January.

Ministerial meetings

Following a Link meeting with the Minister for Government Policy, Oliver Letwin MP, in December 2011, another meeting is being organised with the Minister and the Secretary of State at Defra, Caroline Spelman MP, in February, to discuss the Habitats and Birds Directives.



National Planning Policy Framework

The Land Use Planning Group met with Ruth Stanier, Deputy Director, and other officials at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 11 January to express their concerns over the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF). The key concerns raised at the meeting were the inconsistencies in the definition of Sustainable Development in the NPPF; the lack of a sequential

approach for dealing with brownfield sites and contradictions between the NPPF and the [Natural Environment White Paper](#). Link will be meeting with the Minister for Planning, Greg Clark MP, to further discuss the NPPF on 8 February.

Revocation of Regional Strategies

Also this month, Link submitted its response to the consultations on the [Revocation of Regional Strategies](#). The response outlined why the Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) performed on the proposed revocations were fundamentally flawed. The key reasons included:

- The SEAs were carried out too late in the process to inform decision making.
- The SEAs are poor quality, with little analysis of alternatives and misleading assertions that planning reform will overcome any problems caused by the revocation of regional strategies.
- The SEAs rely heavily on the NPPF, which is not yet published and therefore subject to change.
- The SEAs assume that local authorities will protect their local environments better than regional strategies did without providing any evidence to back this up.

Link has recommended that key environmental policies should be saved during a transitional period, thereby giving local authorities the chance to incorporate these policies into their local plans.

Link Land Use Planning Working Group meeting

On 19 January the Land Use Planning Working Group held a meeting to discuss the regional strategy consultation, the group's work plan for 2012 and best practice guidance on planning.

All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity

Together with the [Biodiversity Working Group](#), the Land Use Planning Group submitted written evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)'s inquiry on biodiversity and planning in December.

Greenest Planning Ever coalition

The evaluation of Link's Greenest Planning Ever coalition has been finalised following a meeting held on 12 December 2011. The group celebrated their work and discussed the valuable lessons learnt from this successful coalition.



Law Commission meeting

On 25 January representatives of the group met with Dr Keith Vincent, a lawyer in the Law Commission to discuss the Commission's [review of wildlife legislation](#).

The Commission is currently deciding on the scope of its review, with a view to publishing its consultation document – effectively a 'Wildlife Bill' - in July 2012. The meeting was very positive. It became clear that the review will go far beyond 'wildlife management' and will address many aspects of species conservation in England and Wales, along with welfare issues relating to wildlife. However, it remains unclear as to the extent that the review will address areas such as marine.

Link took the opportunity to outline its concerns with the current legislative framework and suggested key areas that the Commission's review should address. Dr Vincent is extremely keen to

obtain the views of all stakeholders, including a wide range of Link's member organisations that he has not already met. Link will therefore be liaising with Dr Vincent to ensure that Link members have the opportunity to contribute to the review process.

The group's next meeting is scheduled for 15 February.



Link Marine Working Group meeting

The Marine Working Group's first meeting of the year took place on 31 January, to finalise the group's work plan for the year. Tim Robbins, Chief Officer at the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries Conservation Agency (IFCA) joined the meeting to discuss IFCA's role in the development and protection of Marine Protected Areas.

Marine Conservation Zone designation

At the end of last year, Link met with the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, to discuss why the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) designation will be delayed by six months. The key points that the Minister raised were the lack of an evidence base for the MCZs and a deficiency in data. Link expressed disappointment that the Government's commitment to have an ecologically coherent network of MCZs in place by 2012 has been missed. Link is currently organising another meeting with the Minister for February.

True State of Our Seas

In response to the Government missing its 2012 target, Link has produced the third in its series of Marine Act Parliamentary Bulletins. The [True State of Our Seas](#) expresses concern over the increasing pressures placed on UK seas and the wildlife they support and explains why action is needed now to reverse the damage. The bulletin was sent this month to a large number of MPs and peers.



EFRA evidence session

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee held an [evidence session](#) on the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) on 18 January. Paul Wilkinson, Head of Living Landscapes at The Wildlife Trusts, gave evidence on behalf of Link regarding implementation of NEWP to date, payment for Ecosystem Services and issues surrounding funding. To see the full evidence session click [here](#) and for more information please click [here](#).

Meeting with Defra

Link met with Defra on 24 January to discuss Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs). Nicola Hutchinson attended this meeting on behalf of Link. There is now a clearer understanding of what LNPs should do and more information from Defra will be available in due course. The next meeting with Defra on the NEWP is scheduled for 1 February.

Green Infrastructure Partnership

The Green Infrastructure Partnership held its first meeting on 5 December 2011, with over 50 organisations present. Katherine Hawkins, Biodiversity Officer at The Wildlife Trusts represented Link. The meeting provided an opportunity for organisations to sign up to be partners of the various workstrands including economic/valuation; education, training and skills; urban design and productive landscapes and biodiversity.



Water White Paper

The Government's [Water White Paper](#) (WWP) was published in December 2011. The Blueprint for Water Coalition subsequently met the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, on 12 January to discuss the white paper. The meeting was very productive and provided an opportunity for the coalition to stress that while the WWP contains good proposals, the long time scales and the lack of immediate action is concerning. For more information please click [here](#). Link has also submitted [written evidence](#) to the EFRA Select Committee for the Water White Paper inquiry.

Link Water Working Group meeting

On 10 January the Water Working Group met to discuss their work plan for 2012. Also on 10 January, the group met Trevor Bishop, Ian Johnson and Sheena Engineer from the Environment Agency (EA) to discuss the WFD, abstraction management and hydropower, as well as how the EA and the Blueprint coalition can work together and better share information.

Blueprint for Water

The Blueprint coalition met with the Freshwater Biological Association (FBA) on 19 January for a very productive meeting about FBA's involvement in the Coalition. Representatives of the Blueprint coalition also plan to meet with Pauline Crellin, Head of the Sustainable Drainage Systems Team at Defra, to discuss the current consultation on national standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems and [Implementation of the Sustainable Drainage Provisions in Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act \(2010\)](#).

The Water Working Group is also planning to respond to the [Nitrates Directive consultation](#) and currently preparing a response to the Periodic Review of Water Pricing in 2014.



Link Whales Working Group meeting

The last Whales Working Group meeting took place on 13 December, and included discussion around the group's 2012 work plan. Priorities for 2012 include: acting to end the whaling programmes in Japan, Norway and Iceland; co-ordinating NGO responses to threats to cetaceans; and working on Link's priorities for the 64th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission, scheduled to take place in Panama on 11 June to 6 July 2012.

UK cetaceans meeting

The next UK cetaceans meeting will take place in February. Items being discussed include: updates on threats to cetaceans, Marine Conservation Zones and Special Areas of Conservation including Cardigan Bay monitoring. The group also plan to discuss the review of UK Law and the WDCS-led paper, *Looking forward to 'strict protection': A critical review of the current legal regime for cetaceans in UK waters*'.

IWC meeting

A meeting of the IWC like-minded countries is scheduled for 5 March 2011, in London.



Environmental Audit Committee

On 11 January the International Fund for Animal Welfare met with the Environmental Audit Committee to discuss the scope of the Committee's inquiry into wildlife crime. IFAW put forward the case that the focus of the inquiry should be on wildlife crime. Link's Wildlife Trade Working Group supported this view and [submitted a letter to the EAC](#) with sign-on from 10 Link members. A focus on wildlife crime is particularly timely as in 2012 the UK will be updating its Control of Trade in Endangered Species (COTES) Regulations and a new National Crime Agency is expected to be introduced this year. Furthermore the Law Commission is already broadly reviewing UK wildlife law.

The EAC announced the [scope of its inquiry](#) into wildlife crime on the 20 January. While the scope is broader than hoped, the EAC will be examining the scale of, and risks posed by, the illicit trade in wildlife and wildlife products.

JLG meeting

Members of the Link Wildlife Trade Working Group attended a meeting on 11 January of the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG), chaired by Defra's [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species](#) (CITES) and International Species Policy Team. Discussions focused around the EU regulations review which aims to be finalised by April 2012 and preparations for the 16th Conference of the Parties on CITES in March 2013. The next JLG meeting will take place on 16 May in London.



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