

E-bulletin: June 2012

Welcome to Link's June e-bulletin. Please see below for our 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](#).



Meeting with Defra

On 27 June, members of the Biodiversity Working Group met with Robin Mortimer, Director for Sustainable Land Management and Livestock Farming at Defra. Discussions focussed on [Link's critique of Biodiversity 2020](#), the strategy's delivery plan, NGO engagement and the UK Biodiversity Indicators for [Biodiversity 2020](#). It was a very positive meeting, with agreement that more can be done to engage partners with the *Biodiversity 2020* outcomes through better communications.

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

On 18 June Link submitted a 35-page technical [response to the Government's consultation on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#). This was a Joint Links response, coordinated by Link and supported by 27 member organisations from across the UK. In particular, the response expressed disappointment with the lack of ambition shown by Government and questioned whether the UK will succeed in achieving Good Environmental Status in the marine environment by 2020 with the targets that have currently been set.

Forests meeting

On 14 June Link held a well-attended members' meeting on Forests, to discuss issues around the [Independent Panel on Forestry's](#) report, due to be published on 4 July. Link will seek to provide an immediate response when the report is published, followed by a more detailed response later in the summer.

Management Committee meeting

Link's trustees and staff held a very successful away day over 19/20 June, providing an opportunity to share ideas and information and to discuss Link's work in the months and years ahead, particularly in the context of the ongoing strategic review.

We are grateful to the many people who contributed to Link's strategic review. Link's consultant has now submitted a preliminary analysis of Link's current strategy, based on member feedback. The trustees and staff are now considering and developing the proposals, with a view to reporting to members later this summer.

Joint Links

Joint Links' biennial seminar will be hosted by Northern Ireland Environment Link, at Strangford Lough, Belfast on 26 - 27 September 2012. Areas being addressed include: valuing our natural capital, CAP reform, marine, legal issues and joint working. If you would like more information, or to book a place, please contact [Louise](#).

Link's AGM – date for your diary

Link's Annual General Meeting has been confirmed for 5 December 2012 and will be taking place at CPRE's offices in London. More details to follow shortly.

Olympic period

The Link secretariat will be available throughout the Olympic and Paralympic period but we will be working remotely for much of the time and keeping meetings to a minimum. For further information on Link's Olympics contingency plan please contact [Louise](#).



RDPE Programme Monitoring Committee meeting

On 14 June, the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Programme Monitoring Committee meeting took place. The group primarily discussed the design and programme planning for the new RDPE, the Annual Progress Report 2011 and the Environmental Stewardship Training and Information Programme. Abi Bunker, Chair of the Agriculture Working Group, represented Link at the meeting.

High Nature Value Farming

Link members attended a seminar on 18 June on High Nature Value (HNV) farming, organised by the [European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism](#) (EFNCP). The seminar looked at case studies and best practises of HNV farming in the UK. Presentations and a note of the discussion will be placed on the EFNCP website in due course.

Agri-Environment Stakeholder Group

Link members attended an informal meeting with Defra on 22 June, to discuss issues relating to agri-environment schemes.



Biodiversity Working Group teleconference

The Biodiversity Working Group held a teleconference on 22 June, to discuss progress against our critique of [Biodiversity 2020](#) and outstanding issues. Link members are still concerned that baselines for measuring progress against the strategy are not in place, that it is unclear whether Nature Improvement Areas are delivering against the strategy, and that there is a lack of transparency

about biodiversity information on the one hand, and on the other hand a lack of clear incentives for partners to get involved in delivering *Biodiversity 2020*. Members also discussed the National Adaptation Programme, and the invite from Defra to have a Link rep on the Climate Ready Biodiversity and Ecosystems Working Group.

Natural England webinar

The Biodiversity Working Group held a webinar with Ben McCarthy and Andy Brown from Natural England on 29 June to look at delivery offers from Link members for the *Biodiversity 2020* as well as how Natural England are adapting their programmes to better deliver *Biodiversity 2020* outcomes for species and habitats.



Habitats and Birds

Going forward

Following the publication of [Defra's response](#) to its review of the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives, the task and finish group will be continuing as a virtual group. The group will seek to feed into [initiatives stemming from the review](#). The group will look to meet in October to discuss the progress of the review's recommendations and related issues.



Land Use Planning

Meeting with the LGA

On 21 June, the Land Use Planning Working Group met with Clarissa Corbisiero, Senior Adviser at the Local Government Association (LGA). The main area for discussion was the [NPPF](#), including [Link's response](#) and reactions at the LGA from local authorities and planners. There was also discussion over nationally significant infrastructure projects and the ongoing role of guidance. The LGA believe that there is need for guidance but local authorities need space to make their own decisions.

LUPWG meeting

Link's Land Use Planning Work Group will be meeting in early August to discuss gathering information on the impacts of the NPPF and the guidance 'landscape'.



Legal Strategy

Conservation covenants

The Legal Strategy Working Group will be providing input into the Law Commission review, due to be published in August, by collating comments from across the sector on the concept of conservation covenants and how they could contribute to the achievement of conservation objectives. A briefing paper and simple questionnaire have been prepared and circulated as a way of recording comments. Link volunteers will collate comments from the sector for submission to the Law Commission later in the summer.



Mobile Species

Link representatives attended a stakeholder workshop at the British Trust for Ornithology's headquarters in Thetford, Norfolk, on 12 June to get feedback on the preliminary outputs of the Defra funded project, 'The Contribution of Marine Protected Areas to Protecting Highly Mobile Species in English Waters'. Link subsequently wrote to Defra to express concern about the progress with, and intentions for, the project.



NEWP + 1

On 17 July, Defra will be holding an event to mark the one year anniversary of the Natural Environment White Paper. The event, titled '*How do we secure the value of nature at home and abroad?*', will look at the progress made in delivering the NEWP and the measures needed to ensure that the value of nature is properly accounted for in decisions on how land is used. Link will be publishing a reflection on progress on NEWP implementation in the coming months.



WFD consultation response

On 8 June the Joint Links [submitted a response](#) to the Water Framework Directive (WFD) consultation on environmental standards. The response raised concerns over the lack of a precautionary approach for specific pollutants, wetlands status classification and river flows. There appears to be an assumption that standards should be set in a way that minimises risk of wasted investment rather than maximises environmental protection. Joint Links also expressed disappointment that the development of Common Standards for Natura 2000 sites is yet to be completed successfully.

Institution of Civil Engineers

The Institution of Civil Engineers' (ICE) [State of the Nation](#) report on Water was launched on 7 June. This very positive report puts forward a series of recommendations needed to improve the state of the nation's infrastructure and associated services. The report aligns with the Blueprint for Water's policy asks, particularly with regard to the call for universal metering.

'Love Your Rivers' campaign

On 27 June, the Blueprint for Water met with Defra to discuss the 'Love Your Rivers' campaign and the scope for NGO involvement.

Blueprint for Water Scorecard

The Blueprint for Water coalition has held a series of teleconferences to discuss how to rate Government progress against the [2010 Blueprint for Water](#) targets. The scorecard is due for launch in November 2012.

Water Working Group meeting

The next Water Working Group meeting will be taking place on 30 August and will be hosted by the National Trust at their offices in Swindon. Agenda items include a PR14 update, National Drought Management Group update, the Blueprint scorecard and the draft Water Bill.



IWC meeting update

Link representatives are attending the 64th International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting in Panama, which is currently meeting in closed sessions until its plenary opens in July. Earlier in June, Link produced a briefing paper for the IWC. The paper, which highlights priorities and key areas of concern, has been sent to Defra and the IWC Commissioner and will inform the discussions of the UK delegation in Panama.



Joint NGO Liaison Group meeting

In late May, members of the Link Wildlife Trade Working Group attended a meeting of the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG), chaired by Defra's CITES and International Species Policy Team. Discussions primarily focussed on the CITES charging review and known and likely proposals at CoP16. The next JLG meeting will take place on 17 July.



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