

Inside the Issue

1 Headlines
Quote of the Quarter
Letter from the Chair

2 Working Groups
Farming & Rural Dev.
Wildlife & Trade
Land Use Planning

3 Working Groups
Land Use Planning
(cont)
Minerals
PPG9
Task Forces
Marine Nature Cons.

4 Task Forces
Water Legislation
AMP4

Sister Links
Scotland
Northern Ireland
Wales

5 Organisational Dev.
Contacts

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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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Wildlife and
Countryside



Quarterly Report April - June 2002

Whilst England goes for a second helping of Curry, Japan and Norway still select whale from the menu

Quote of the Quarter - Meacher: “Why didn’t Link inform the police Wildlife Crime Unit when there was a consultation about changing the wildlife protection regulations?”

Link: “We thought DEFRA would tell the police about it!”

Letter from the Chair

The second quarter of 2002 proved to be an interesting one, with the reshuffle of government ministers and departments. The split of the DTLR and the allocation of planning, local government and the regions into John Prescott’s ODPM gave a whole feeling of déjà vu.

Within Link there has been a lot of work on farming issues, planning, and wildlife and trade. The farming group have worked on the consultation on the findings of the Curry Commission. Martin Harper has been representing Link members at the Lord Whitty group. The farming group postcard campaign has shown the support for reforming farming subsidies and funding environmental improvements. Over 12,000 postcards were sent in.

In planning, the select committee highlighted concerns about many of the green paper proposals. Concerns were voiced not just by us, but planners and developers too.

Campaigners on whaling issues have been very busy at the IWC meeting in Shimonoseki. The outcomes from this meeting were better than many feared. The Marine Conservation Bill met choppy water in the Lords. On a brighter note, the All Party group on Wildlife Protection is proving a useful forum for members to meet parliamentarians and ministers – the closer working of this group and the APG on Conservation should bring long-term benefits.

Finally, Link said goodbye to Sonia Coventry and welcomed Jen Bolton as the new Office and Information Co-ordinator. We hope she will enjoy working at Link – for a long time!

Debbie Johnson our Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator is leaving us in July, for a job as Shropshire’s Rural Transport Officer. Debbie has been a great member of the Link team and will be missed by many of the working groups and task forces. We wish her well in her new life and hope she keeps in touch. Annie Smith, Debbie’s replacement, will be starting on 12th August.

I hope you all have a good summer break sometime,

All best wishes

Tony Burton

Working Groups

Farming and Rural Development

Following the publication of the Curry Commission's recommendations in January, Link's farming group was disappointed that the Government's response was to launch yet another round of consultation, in order to develop a Strategy for sustainable food and farming. Link urged Government to resource the full implementation of the Curry recommendations through the Spending Review, both in written comments and through a public postcard campaign, targeted at Tony Blair, which has already provoked over 12,000 responses. Link has taken up a place on Lord Whitty's Contact Group, which is overseeing the development of the Strategy.

The review of agri-environment schemes began in earnest this quarter with the first stage of open consultation. Link met with Geoff Radley, who leads the review for DEFRA, and developed a joint response, building on last year's Greenprint.

Activities

8/4 - Agri-environment Meeting with Geoff Radley (11 att from 9 orgs)

1/5 - Meeting with 15 people from 12 orgs

8/5 - ERDP National Consultation Group

27/5 - Lord Whitty Contact Group

Outputs

Response to Agri-environment Consultation - sign on 13 orgs

Response to Sustainable Agriculture Consultation - sign on 15 orgs

Sustainable Agriculture (postcard) campaign - sign on 15 orgs (incl 2 non-Link)

Response to Lords Inquiry into EU Regulations and Agriculture - sign on 13 orgs

Activity Forecast

8/7 - Lord Whitty Sustainable Food and Farming Contact Group meeting

10/7 - Fischler publishes CAP Mid-Term Review proposals

End July - Spending Review announcements

5/8 - Meeting with EN/LUPG, plus fund-switching meeting in advance

Site visit with Geoff Radley and members of Conservation Management Division

Wildlife and Trade (including Whaling)

Link successfully lobbied DEFRA to include Peter Richardson, an NGO Turtle Expert on the UK Delegation to the Hawksbill Turtle dialogue meeting in the Cayman Islands in May. Peter was able to take the opportunity to visit the Cayman Turtle Farm, which has applied for registration with CITES as a captive breeding operation, and about which Link members have some serious concerns.

Proposals for CITES CoP12 were published in June. As expected, Cuba once again propose downlisting their hawksbill population, Japan have put forward proposals to downlist the Minke and Brides Whale and there are a number of worrying elephant proposals. Link will again be supporting the UK proposal to list the Basking Shark on Appendix II, as well as proposals to uplist the Patagonian and Antarctic Toothfish, the Black Sea Bottlenose Dolphin, Bigleaf Mahogany and others.

The much anticipated International Whaling Commission in Shimonoseki, a Japanese Whaling Port, ended in a virtual stalemate, with most initiative from both the pro- and anti-whaling lobby defeated. The only marked development was the rejection of two requests for indigenous subsistence whaling quotas, which had previously

been renewed as a matter of routine. Worryingly Norwegian and Icelandic plans to resume commercial whaling are still live.

Activities

15/4 - Whaling forum

15/4 - Whaling meeting, 10 att from 7 orgs

28/6 - Internal Wildlife Trade meeting

IWC meeting, 2 Link members of Delegation

Hawksbill Turtle Range States Dialogue meeting, 1 Link member of Delegation

Outputs

Letter to DEFRA pre: Hawksbill Dialogue - sign on 8 orgs

Link submission to UK IWC Delegation - sign on 8 orgs

Letter to Morley/Beckett re: Ministerial presence at IWC in Shimonoseki - sign on 9 orgs

Letter to Morley regarding Norwegian Dolphin research - sign on 8 orgs (incl 1 non-Link)

Activity Forecast

Meeting with DEFRA pre- EC CITES Committee, 15th July

Develop common positions regarding the CoP12 proposals

Lobby further around the Cayman Turtle Farm proposal

Land Use Planning

After a hectic first quarter responding to the green paper the Land Use Planning group have been awaiting the government's response, this is now due in the third week of July. Members of the group have been lobbying hard in Westminster and Whitehall. The tremendous campaign run by some members to get the public to write in about the PGP paid off – about 16,000 responses to the PGP

Working Groups and Task Forces

were received, which must be a record for planning! The select committee requested many Link members to give evidence on planning reform, including the MIP proposals and were critical of many proposals in the PGP when Lord Falconer gave evidence.

It was not long afterwards that Falconer was moved in the “Byers” reshuffle, which may make it easier for the government to ditch some of the more extreme proposals. Falconers’ replacement is Lord Rooker, his CV gave cause for optimism, but some of his early comments about house building are concerning.

The discussion about a “statutory purpose for planning” raised some interesting issues within the group. Everyone had concerns about proposing a form of wording, especially given how the words “sustainable development” can be used in some quarters to justify all “development”. Also there are concerns about stating a “purpose for planning” and how this might be used by developers in the courts to try to overturn planning decisions.

MIPs – the Commons were not impressed by an attempt to give them responsibility for decisions on MIPs; one MP commented that they would like to see their family sometime. Several Link members have worked hard on this one, hopefully the work will pay off soon.

Activities

23/4 – Full group internal meeting (10 atts from 10 orgs)

Outputs

Statutory purpose for planning – still under discussion

Activity Forecast

15/7 - Planning policy paper to be published?

1/8 Full Land Use Planning Group meeting

Response to planning policy

Land Use Planning: Minerals

The Aggregates Levy and Sustainability Fund finally came into being at the start of this quarter, but it remains too early to assess their success.

Activities

24/4 - Environmental Procurement of Aggregates Steering Group meeting

Activity Forecast

11/7 - Meet with DEFRA re: Aggregates Supply Guidelines

Meet with MIRO and WRAP re application of the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund

PPG 9

The group held two meetings to discuss current information and share intelligence about the current state of play for a revised PPG9. Information indicates that PPG9 will not be in line for reform until 2003 at the earliest. Many members believe this is too slow and that PPG9 needs reform now. Jonathan Price from English Nature was invited to the Link meeting in May where a fruitful discussion produced a framework for future work on a revised PPG9.

The Welsh have decided not to wait for Whitehall and have opened consultation on how to incorporate the Habitats Directive into planning.

Activities

23/4 – PPG9 group meeting

23/5 – PPG9 group meeting

Outputs

Draft Framework for a new PPG9

Activity Forecast

Meeting to discuss Welsh consultation (possibly joint with WEL)

Work on draft framework, possible further joint meetings with EA

Marine Nature Conservation Task Force (including Bycatch)

The Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill entered the Lords this quarter, sponsored by Baroness Anelay. After successive postponements, the Bill finally passed through second reading. However, Baroness Anelay’s promotion to the front bench meant that the Bill has lost its sponsor and, at time of writing, and with Recess looming, the prospects for further progress appear precarious.

The government published its much-awaited Marine Stewardship report at the start of May. Although the report itself says little new, it did include a welcome restatement of some key commitments and it did signal the launch of several potentially influential streams of work: reviewing of Consents in the marine environment, taking forward the EU CZM recommendations, and developing spatial planning in the marine context. Link members look forward to engaging with these processes as they develop.

Following several delays, the CFP Review was finally launched at the end of May. Whilst our primary engagement with the review is likely to be around bycatch issues, Link is providing a mechanism for members to share information and intelligence. A coalition of Link members joined together to lobby major fish retailers, restaurants and manufacturers to put pressure on Fischler to adequately address bycatch issues through the Review.

Activities

3/4 - RMNC Regional Seas Pilot meeting

17/5 - Internal meeting (13 att from 7 orgs)

26/6 - RMNC meeting

Outputs

Marine Bill letter to Lords pre-Second reading, sign on 9 orgs

Activity Forecast

19/7 - Internal meeting

Task Forces

Water Policy and Legislation

The Link members from England and Scotland are working together on the consultation on the WFD. SEPA published its consultation on the technical Annexes to the Water Framework Directive rather later than expected, though just in time for a Workshop in York. The workshop included members from England and Scotland. Several members of the group made presentations outlining the issues. The WFD is highly significant as it covers all water including that held in bogs and coastal waters, as well as rivers, lakes and groundwater. Link members are concerned about the definitions for different quality gradings. This significantly could affect the effect of the Directive, grading poor quality water bodies as being good quality would remove the need to improve them.

The Environment Agency finally published its consultation on 1st July.

AMP4

There have been several meetings to consider the research which is to be carried out by MORI. Link members suggested many amendments to the original market research questionnaire, many of which were incorporated into the final version.

A joint Press release was issued by OFWAT to announce the market research.

Activities

Internal Meetings

1/5 - Meeting to discuss technical aspects of WFD. 4 atts from 4 orgs

24/5 - Task force meeting, 4 attendees from 4 organisations (different from meeting on 1st)

10/6 - Water Workshop, York, 10 attendees from 9 organisations

External Meetings

AMP4 Meetings

Outputs

Draft responses to the WFD technical annexes consultation

Comments on AMP4 questionnaire
Joint OFWAT Link press release

Activity Forecast

July - Link to publish joint response to the SEPA consultation

23/8 - Closing date for responses to SEPA consultation

30/9 - Closing date for responses to EA consultation

Welsh Link

Members met with the Agriculture & Rural Affairs Minister to discuss Agri-Environmental schemes; also met with civil servants preparing the Wales Spatial Plan and fed in directly to the Assembly pre-considering proposals for Agri-environmental and CAP Reform.

A campaign to create a new national park in Wales has been initiated, and an Environmental Compact has been launched between the voluntary sector and Government bodies.

WWCL participated in the Wales and the World Sustainable Development Conference, and a Sustainable Development forum is being convened. WWCL has prioritised work on an Environmental Manifesto and is putting together an Energy Working Group to find common ground amongst the members on renewable energy issues.

A change of name to "Wales Environmental Link" has been agreed.

Sister Links

Northern Ireland Link

Northern Ireland Link has spent much of the last quarter developing its new Rural Community Environmental Capacity Building project, conducting a survey of rural attitudes to the environment in Northern Ireland and contacting groups to obtain pilot projects. They played host to the Joint Links meeting in May, which discussed a number of areas for joint working at a UK level and how the different Links were dealing with issues in their devolved administrations.

The environmental Education Forum held a major conference on Education for Sustainable Development at the end of May, and is now carrying out work on developing ESD teaching resources. Two new Fact Sheets, on Biodiversity and on Agriculture and Rural Development, are now available.

Work is beginning on a "report card" for the environment in Northern Ireland, to be prepared for the autumn and used as a political awareness-raising tool.

Scottish Link

11/6 - Conference organised by Scottish Link with partner organisations including UKCSD, Forward Scotland, Scottish Council for Development and Industry, Scottish Enterprise and others: 'Managing to be Sustainable'. A conference report will be available soon.

25/6 - Launch of Scotland's progress report on sustainability: 'Must Try Harder'.

Organisational Development

New staff: Jen Bolton started as Link's new Office and Information Co-ordinator on 2nd July. Jen comes from a strong IT and administration background, she has lately been working on web events and has lots of Internet knowledge, so if you keep an eye on the website you'll probably see some changes.

Link said goodbye to Sonia Coventry, our previous Office and Information Co-ordinator in May. Sonia is now working for Kent County Council running their Local Access Forum so she is keeping in touch with our access members.

With Debbie leaving in July we advertised for her replacement in June and received many excellent applications. We appointed Annie Smith who currently works for the RSPB on a regional farming project, but who has also worked in Italy on Landscape scale survey work, the Wildlife Trusts in Northamptonshire, and she has visited Tanzania and the Solomon Islands. Her first degree was in natural sciences, specialising in zoology, and she has also a Masters in Conservation from UCL. After a period of staffing change we are looking to help Annie to settle in as quickly as possible.

We will be making some changes within the office, changing the office layout and refining some of our internal operations to make them more streamlined. Most of these changes will be happening in the last week of July and first week of August and there may be a short period of a few hours when our server is down.

CAN UK

The decision has been taken to close down the CAN office. This will take a while as we go through all the procedures necessary to formally wind up the company. All inquiries should be re directed to the members who have an interest in climate change. The work will go on through the members who are still active in climate change work and the name may survive too.

Working Groups

Farming and Rural Development

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Land Use Planning

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Forestry: Hilary Allison
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Minerals: Emily Richmond
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Wildlife and Trade

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Task Forces

Marine Nature Conservation

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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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