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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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Letter from the Chair...

Dear members

The third quarter of the year has seen much change in the political arena. With a new Prime Minister and a subsequent reorganisation of Government departments and Ministers, Link's Working Groups and Task Forces have had an almost completely new set of Ministers to meet and update on our campaigns and activities.

This quarter saw the long-awaited publication of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list of priority species and habitats to which Link has contributed much time and effort. Link's Farming and Rural Development Working Group also published a policy paper on Bioenergy in the UK, and succeeded in getting good media coverage on this very topical issue.

The Land Use Planning group has also been kept busy with drafting a detailed response to the Planning White Paper, and holding a number of follow up meetings with Ministers and Government officials.

The Water Working Group's Blueprint for Water campaign has also continued apace this quarter, with the group producing detailed briefings on what we'd like to see in Defra's Water Strategy, a memorandum to the EFRA Committee inquiry on flooding, and a technical review by all four UK Links of Phase 2 of the UK Technical Advisory Group's standards and conditions.

This quarter also saw the welcome appointment of Joanna Crouch as Link's new Marine Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator. Jo will be co-ordinating the work of the Marine Task Force and Link's Marine Bill campaign.

Finally, this will be my last quarterly report as Chair of Link, as I will be stepping down at the AGM on 5th December. I have thoroughly enjoyed my four years as Chair of Link, and hope to see many of you to celebrate my last AGM as Chair, at which my yet to be found replacement will be appointed.

Best wishes



Dr. Hilary Allison

Working Groups



Acting Chair: Nigel Bourn, Butterfly Conservation
Acting Vice Chair: John Everitt, The Wildlife Trusts
Secretary: Jodie Bettis

Biodiversity

On 28th June, following Gordon Brown's reorganisation of Government Ministers, Joan Ruddock MP became Defra's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and the Minister with responsibility for biodiversity.

This quarter, members of the Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) served on many external fora including the England Biodiversity Group, the UK Biodiversity Indicators Steering Group, the UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group (BRIG) and the Priorities Review Group (PRG). Link members also attended the LBAP Seminar in September.

In August, Link accepted an invitation from the GB Non-native Species Secretariat to join the Non-native Species "Sounding Board" and in September BWG members met with Natural England (NE). The group submitted recommendations to NE regarding the Section 41 list of species and habitats of principal importance in England under the NERC Act, and a Link/NE workshop on S41 is planned for October.

On 28th August, new Minister for Biodiversity Joan Ruddock launched the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list of priority species and habitats. The full list can be found at www.ukbap.org.uk/newprioritylist.aspx.



Chair: Ian Woodhurst, CPRE
Vice Chair: Nick Collinson, Woodland Trust
Secretary: Alexia Wellbelove

Farming and Rural Development

On 28th June, following Gordon Brown's reorganisation of Government Ministers, Lord Rooker was appointed as Defra's Minister of State and will lead Defra's ministerial responsibility for food and farming. Jonathan Shaw MP was appointed as Defra's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State whose responsibilities include rural affairs and landscape.

In July, members of the Farming and Rural Development (FRD) Working Group launched Link's UK Bioenergy policy paper - Bioenergy in the UK - Turning green promises into environmental reality - at a workshop attended by representatives from Government, statutory agencies and other interested organisations, and the event received good media attention. The document is available to download at www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2007/Bioenergy_in_the_UK_Link_paper_final.pdf.

On 16th July the EU's Agriculture Council passed a decision to cut farmers' set-aside rates to 0% for the coming year. As a result of Link's concerns that this decision was made without any environmental evaluation of the current scheme, a letter was sent to Hilary Benn MP, the Secretary of State for the Environment, in late July, signed by ten Chief Executives. On 26th September, Defra announced the establishment of a monitoring programme under its Agricultural Change and Environment Observatory (ACEO). The programme will be responsible for assessing the impact of the 0% rate.

Throughout the quarter the Environmental Stewardship Review, which is being co-ordinated by Natural England, has been underway, with a number of workstreams commencing their evaluation. These are due to report by the end of September and Link will be helping to co-ordinate member input into the various workstreams throughout the coming months.

Members of the Farming and Rural Development (FRD) Working Group attended a Land Use Policy Group (LUPG) conference in Brussels on 18th-20th September which discussed the future policies for rural Europe in 2013 & beyond.

Working Groups



Chair: Mike Wood, RSPB
Vice Chair: James Cooper, Woodland Trust
Secretary: Alexia Wellbelove

Woodland

The Woodland Subgroup met with the Forestry Commission on the 16th July to discuss woodland policy and Link's manifesto. It has been agreed that annual meetings will take place from now on.



Chair: Fiona Mahon, The Wildlife Trusts
Vice Chair: Simon Marsh, RSPB
Secretary: Jodie Bettis

Land Use Planning

On 28th June, following Gordon Brown's reorganisation of Government Ministers, Hazel Blears MP was appointed Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and John Healey MP was appointed Minister for State for CLG.

In July, representatives of the Land Use Planning Working Group (LUPWG) and Planning Disaster Coalition colleagues met with senior officials from the Cabinet Office, CLG and Defra to discuss in detail particular concerns with the proposed reforms to the planning system as set out in the Planning White Paper. LUPWG members also attended the All Party Parliamentary Group on Future Housing & Planning meeting in July, raising a number of their concerns over the White Paper with Housing Minister Yvette Cooper MP.

The LUPWG met CLG Planning Directorate officials in September to discuss, among other things, Link's response to the Planning White Paper, the planning policy review, and the Housing Green Paper. Link's response to the White Paper - 'Planning for a Sustainable Future' - can be downloaded from our website at www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2007/Link_response_to_PWP_17Aug07.pdf.



Strategy Chair: Tom Le Quesne, WWF
Campaigns Chair: Saskia Hervey, WWF
Policy Chair: Phil Burston, RSPB
Vice Chair (Strategy): Helen Meech, National Trust
Vice Chair (Campaigns): Danny Stone, RSPB
Vice Chair (Policy): Michelle Claxton, The Wildlife Trusts
Secretary: Jodie Bettis

Water

On 28th June, following Gordon Brown's reorganisation of Government Ministers, Phil Woolas MP was appointed as Defra's Minister of State with responsibility for water issues.

In June, members of the Water Working Group (WWG) met with the Environment Agency's Heads of Department and OFWAT, and with Natural England in July. These meetings were focused on promoting the Blueprint for Water, discussing how each organisation can help deliver the 10 steps to sustainable water by 2015.

In July, the group submitted a collection of detailed briefings on a selection of the Blueprint for Water policy asks to the Defra Water Strategy team. These are available for download from our website at www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2007/Blueprint_briefings_for_Defra_Water_Strategy_Jul07.pdf.

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Working Groups

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In response to an announcement by the Government on compulsory metering, an open letter was sent to the Times, which is available on our website at www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2007/Blueprint_for_Water_letter_to_The_Times_21Aug07.pdf. Also in August, the Blueprint for Water wrote an article on the decline of our iconic freshwater environments that was published on Bank Holiday Monday in The Telegraph.

The WWG (Strategy) group met on in September to discuss plans for the one-year review of the Blueprint for Water. The anniversary will be marked by a parliamentary event and the launch of a progress report in late November. Also in September, Link submitted a written memorandum to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee Inquiry on flooding.

Finally this quarter, the four Joint Links submitted a collective response to Phase II of the UKTAG Stakeholder Review on Environmental Standards. SEL and WCL later met with the UKTAG Chair and representatives in September to discuss the Joint Links response in detail, a copy of which is available for download from our website at www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2007/Joint_Links_response_to_UKTAG_Phase_II_consultation_9AUg07.pdf



Chair: Jenny Lonsdale, Environmental Investigation Agency
Vice Chair: Claire Bass, WSPA
Secretary: Alexia Wellbelove

Whales

On 28th June, following Gordon Brown's reorganisation of Government Ministers, Jonathan Shaw MP was appointed as Defra's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State whose responsibilities include whales. The group sent a welcome letter to Jonathan Shaw MP and will follow this up with a meeting in October.

The Whales Working Group met twice during the quarter in July and September to consider the outcomes of the recent IWC meeting (IWC59) and the cetacean discussions at CITES CoP14 and discuss next steps for Link in the run up to the next IWC meeting (IWC60) in June 2008.

The group also sent a letter to Iceland's Foreign Minister, welcoming her comments on the negative impacts of continued whaling in Iceland. This letter aimed to encourage the Minister to speak up within Iceland and to inform her of the wider international opinion regarding Iceland's whaling programme. In October Iceland announced their decision not to allocate a commercial whaling quota.



Chair: Rob Atkinson, RSPCA
Vice Chair: Cathy Williamson, Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society
Secretary: Alexia Wellbelove

Wildlife and Trade

On 28th June, following Gordon Brown's reorganisation of Government Ministers, Joan Ruddock MP was appointed as Defra's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State whose responsibilities include wildlife and trade.

The Wildlife and Trade Working Group (WTWG) met in July to discuss the outcomes of CITES CoP14 and next steps for Link. The group also met with Defra in September to discuss these issues.

Task Forces



Chair: Joan Edwards, The Wildlife Trusts
Vice Chair (Campaign & Media): Richard Harrington, Marine Conservation Society
Vice Chair (Policy): Jan Brown, WWF
Secretary: Joanna Crouch

Marine

On 28th June, following Gordon Brown's reorganisation of Government Ministers, Jonathan Shaw MP was appointed as Defra's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State whose responsibilities include marine and fisheries issues.

Link sponsored a Coastal Futures conference on the Marine Bill White Paper held on 3rd July. Representatives of the Link Marine Task Force (MTF) as well as colleagues from the Scottish Environment Link, Wales Environment Link and Northern Ireland MTFs attended the conference, and supplied a joint briefing for delegate packs setting out their comments on the Marine Bill White Paper. Kate Reeves (WWF) gave a presentation on behalf of Link on the nature conservation proposals in the White Paper.

MTF members were very disappointed that the Marine Bill was not included in Gordon Brown's draft legislative programme, although Marine was mentioned as a possible topic for a Draft Bill. Since then, members have continued to campaign for a full bill to be included in this year's Queen's Speech and introduced in the next parliamentary session.

MTF members met with Jonathan Shaw MP in July and September to introduce the Minister to Link's campaign for the introduction of comprehensive marine legislation.

In September, the MTF and the sister Link MTFs distributed their joint response to the Marine Bill White Paper to key decision makers and parliamentarians. It is available to download at www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2007/Campaigning_for_a_Sea_Change_4Sep07.pdf. The joint Links have also produced a parliamentary calendar, which they have distributed to parliamentarians across the UK to promote the Marine Bill campaign.

In August, Annie Smith left Link to become RSPB-Cymru's Marine Policy Officer. Then in September, Joanna Crouch joined Link as the new Marine Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator.

General



Consultation Review

In September, Link submitted a response to the Government's review of consultation policy: "Effective Consultation: asking the right questions, asking the right people, listening to the answers", supported by 20 members. You can download the response at www.wcl.org.uk/downloads/2007/Link_Response_to_Cabinet_Office_Consultation_27Sep07.pdf

Environmental Liability Directive (ELD)

On 12th July the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee published its report into [Implementation of the Environmental Liability Directive](#), in which it criticises the Government's 'minimum implementation' approach. In September, Link attended a Defra stakeholder meeting with the Minister for Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Waste - Joan Ruddock MP - on the implementation of the ELD.



Scottish Environment LINK (LINK)

LINK's Campaigning Review held in July proposed an analysis of the barriers to change and the ways in which LINK can help its member bodies and their supporters to act. Also, the LINK2020 project sub-group in its discussions around the celebration of LINK's 20th anniversary year, highlighted the urgent need for environmental NGOs to engage in a movement for individual action in response to climate change. As a result, a scoping of the options and mechanisms was undertaken by LINK's past chair Simon Pepper. These were discussed by members at a special LINK Gathering held in Perth in September. The actions agreed, including NGO's getting their own carbon budgets in order, are now being taken forward by the 2020 sub-group. The next stage will be further discussions with task force convenors and workshops at LINK's Annual Members Congress at Birnam at the end of November.

Task Force work continues with particular emphasis on the programme of the Scottish Parliament of the Climate and Marine Bills and flooding. The LINK Marine Bill Campaign's own website, www.savescottishseas.org, aimed at politicians, researchers and stakeholders, was launched in October.

Preparations for LINK's evening reception at Edinburgh Castle in November being hosted by Richard Lochhead MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, including the report 'A Strong Coherent Voice' by former chair, Mike Scott, are being finalised.



Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)

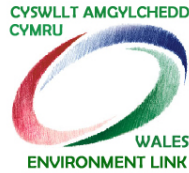
NIEL had three major events in late October - the launch of the NI Archaeology Forum with the Time Team on 18 October in Dungannon, the launch of the Climate Change Coalition NI on 22 Oct in Stormont and a conference on environmental education on 23 October. All went well, with capacity crowds at the first two, including a number of politicians. Preparing for these events has kept NIEL quite busy, as the first two involved developing websites, documents and other associated work. A bid for funding for the NIAF was submitted to the HLF, and a core funding bid to EHS for NIEL's next three years was also prepared over the summer.

The Assembly has produced a Programme for Government which does have sustainable development as a cross cutting theme (as NIEL had been urging), but no mention of funding for it or for developing an independent Environmental Protection Agency, another area of continuing work. The Report from the first independent review of water recommended against water meters, but a second report is being prepared and we will continue to provide information to support the importance of paying for usage through metering.

NIEL has recently revamped its website, and although some work remains to be completed, NIEL urges you to have a look. NIEL has also improved the design and content of NIEL News, its newsletter for members.



Sister Links



Wales Environment Link (WEL)

At the beginning of July, Labour and Plaid Cymru agreed to form a coalition government, and Ministerial portfolios have been divided up between the two parties.

WEL has met with the new Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson, Labour) and discussed issues including the proposed refresh of Wales' Sustainable Development Action Plan, the coalition government's climate change commitments, and the implications of the UK Planning White Paper for Wales.

WEL is to meet with the Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones, Plaid Cymru) shortly to discuss the Rural Development Plan. A meeting has also been planned with the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), so that WEL can input into the development of their new corporate plan.

With the introduction of the new Government of Wales Act, Ministers and Assembly Members have been busy proposing new areas of competence and primary legislation. Consequently, WEL was invited to give evidence to the Committee scrutinising the proposed Legislative Competence Order on Environmental Protection and Waste. The new Act has also led to the creation of Scrutiny Committees which undertake topic-specific inquiries, and WEL has been invited to give evidence to the Sustainability Committee on their inquiry into the reduction of carbon emissions in Wales.

In addition to this, WEL has also been compiling suggestions for the review of the Environment Strategy for Wales Action Plan, which the Government is currently preparing.

News from the Secretariat



Management Committee Meeting

The third Management Committee meeting of 2007 was held on 25th September at Link's offices. Issues discussed at the meeting included: Link's quarterly accounts, Link's strategic policy and communications (both internally amongst members and externally), Associate Membership, and plans for Link's Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The next Management Committee meeting is scheduled for 13th November 2007 at Link's offices.



News from the Secretariat



Other Link news

In August, Annie Smith left Link after five years to become RSPB-Cymru's Marine Policy Officer. In September, Joanna Crouch joined Link as the new Marine Policy & Campaigns Co-ordinator.

In July, the Anglers' Conservation Association became an Associate Member of Link to work on the Blueprint for Water campaign within the Water Working Group. In August, Froglife joined Link as a Full Member to participate in the Biodiversity, and Farming and Rural Development Working Groups. This brings the total number of Link members up to 39. Also during this quarter, the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) applied to become a Full Member of Link. A number of objections were received and following consideration by current Link members, BIAZA's membership application was rejected at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the company held on 2nd October 2007.

Link's Annual General Meeting is scheduled for 5th December 2007. Full details will be sent out in mid November.

If you have any comments or suggestions on this or future quarterly reports, please contact the Information & Office Co-ordinator, Mathew Xerri, in the Link office.

Wildlife and Countryside Link

