

E-bulletin December 2014

Welcome to Link's December 2014 e-bulletin. 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 [Maria](#).



Link's AGM and Annual Debate 2014

Link's 2014 AGM and Annual Debate took place on the 10 December. The debate posed the question: 'critically endangered: how do we protect the spirit of the Habitats and Birds Directives?'

Link was pleased to welcome Dr Micheal O'Briain, Deputy Head of the Nature Unit, DG Environment, European Commission. Dr O'Briain is leading the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) of EU Nature Legislation, including the Habitats and Birds Directives. In a thought-provoking and valuable presentation and Q&A session, Dr O'Briain described the REFIT process, outlined the current timetable and discussed how Link members can engage with the Commission's fitness check consultation. Kate Jennings, chair of Link's Habitats and Birds Task and Finish Group, also presented an outline of members' current views on the Directives and the proposed REFIT process.

Welcome to Link's new Trustee

A warm welcome to Nikki Williams who was voted in as a Link trustee on 10 December at this year's AGM. Nikki is currently the Head of Campaigning for the Woodland Trust.

Link Working Group Chairs and Vice Chairs for 2015

The Chair and Vice Chair positions for Link Working Groups were confirmed on 10 December during this year's AGM and are as follows:

Agriculture Working Group:

Chair: Abi Bunker, RSPB

Vice Chair: Helen Perkins, The Wildlife Trusts

Land Use and Planning Working Group:

Chair: Victoria Bankes Price, Woodland Trust

Vice Chair: Brendan Costelloe, RSPB

Habitats and Birds Task and Finish Group

Chair: Kate Jennings, RSPB

Legal Strategy Group

Chair: Matt Shardlow, Buglife

Vice Chair: Carol Day, RSPB

Marine Working Group

Chair: Joan Edwards, The Wildlife Trusts

Vice Chair: Melissa Moore, WDC

Water Working Group

Chair: Janina Gray, STA

Vice Chair: Kathy Hughes, WWF-UK - interim post until Carrie Hume's (WWT) return in 2015

Whales Working Group

Chair: Jenny Lonsdale, EIA

Vice Chair: John Frizell, Greenpeace

Wildlife Trade Working Group

Chair: Heather Sohl, WWF-UK

Vice Chair: Tania McCrea-Steele, IFAW

Marine Working Group: Evidence to the House of Lords Committee

On 3 December Link provided oral evidence to the House of Lords European Union Sub-Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment and Energy as part of its inquiry into European marine cooperation. Link had submitted [written evidence](#) to the Committee earlier in the autumn.

Joint Link's Update

For a quarterly update from our three sister Links [click here](#).

Link Office Christmas Opening Hours

Links Office will be open as normal until the 24 December after which it will closed until the 2 January 2015. The team at Link wish you all a very merry Christmas!



Working group meeting

The Agriculture Working Group will be holding its first meeting of next year in January 2015. This will be an opportunity for the group to reflect on its achievements and plan future work. Please contact [Morwenna](#) for information on the Agriculture Working Group or the meeting.

Chair and Vice Chair

We are pleased to confirm that Abi Bunker (RSPB) and Helen Perkins (The Wildlife Trusts) have been voted in as Chair and Vice-Chair of the group for 2015. On behalf of the group we extend our thanks to Abi and Helen for their hard work this year and their commitment to support the group in 2015.



REFIT meeting

Link's REFIT Task and Finish Group, set up to address the EU review of the Habitats and Birds Directives, met on the 18 December. The REFIT initiative focuses on reducing 'regulatory burden', so

as to meet EU policy and regulatory goals at least cost. The inclusion of the Birds and Habitats Directives within this process is the latest manifestation of the ongoing threats to the Directives. During the meeting on 18 December the group discussed in detail a federal approach to responding to the process and working as a coalition with Joint Links.

For more information on the meeting and/or Link's work on this issue, please contact [Morwenna](#).

Link's Annual Debate 2014

Link's 2014 Annual Debate took place on the 10 December. The debate posed the question: 'critically endangered: how do we protect the spirit of the Habitats and Birds Directives?'

Link was pleased to welcome Dr Micheal O'Briain, Deputy Head of the Nature Unit, DG Environment, European Commission. Dr O'Briain is leading the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) of EU Nature Legislation, including the Habitats and Birds Directives. In a valuable and thought-provoking presentation and Q&A session, Dr O'Briain described the REFIT process, outlined the current timetable and discussed how Link members can engage with the Commission's fitness check consultation. Kate Jennings, chair of Link's Habitats and Birds Task and Finish Group, also presented an outline of members' current views on the Directives and the proposed REFIT process.
Habitats and Birds Group Chair

Chair and Vice Chair

We are pleased to confirm that Kate Jennings (RSPB) has been voted in as Chair of the group for 2015. On behalf of the group we extend our thanks to Kate for her commitment to support the group in 2015.



Indicators meeting

Link met with Defra on 23 September to discuss the biodiversity indicator on UK NGO spend. This was a very positive meeting and Defra will be sending Link a draft of the report before its publication in December.

Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

Link was represented at the TBG meeting on 10 September. Items on the agenda included the reports on the outcomes for *Biodiversity 2020* and woodlands and Forestry Commission member contributions on biodiversity activity.



The Link INNS Task and Finish Group came to a close at the end of June. The INNS work will continue but primarily outside Link. For more information about current INNS work please contact Kay Haw at the Woodland Trust: KayHaw@woodlandtrust.org.uk

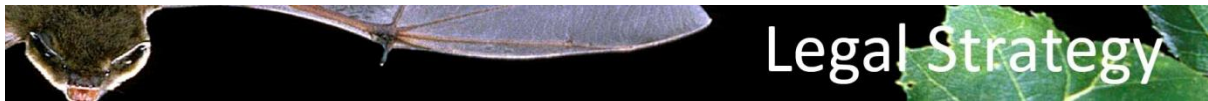


Land Use & Planning Working Group meeting

The team met to discuss 2015 plans and invited Frances Winder, chair of the Natural Values Task and Finish Group, to help us shape the strategy work for biodiversity offsetting. The current Infrastructure Bill was also discussed and the team exchanged thoughts and ideas of how we can contribute as Link in the future.

Chair and Vice Chair

We are pleased to confirm that Victoria Bankes-Price (Woodland Trust) and Brendan Costello (RSPB) have been voted in as Chair and Vice-Chair of the group for 2015. On behalf of the group we extend our thanks to Victoria and Brendan for their commitment to support the group in 2015.



Criminal Justice and Courts Bill

The Lords amendments to the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill will go to a Commons vote on December 1st. The Government intends to vote the Lord's amendments down, however the Opposition is opposing. The notice of amendments given up to and including 27 November 2014 can be found [here](#).

In advance of the debate, the Legal Strategy Group sent an amended briefing to the Shadow Justice Team requesting continuing support for Lord Beecham's amendments (briefing available from [Maria](#)) and emailed friendly backbenchers. Thanks must go to the RSPB's Parliamentary Team for providing much-needed support during the Lords stage of the Bill. The Legal Strategy Group intends to draft compromise amendments if the Bill goes to Ping-Pong.

Legal Strategy Group Meeting

Link's Legal Strategy Group met on 11 November to discuss a range of legal matters. Under discussion included the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill, Aarhus Convention and Judicial Review, the Nature and Wellbeing Act, Conservation Covenants, the Infrastructure Bill and the Smarter Environmental Regulations Review.

The group also discussed the workplan for 2015. In particular how the Legal Strategy Group could contribute to other Link working groups with regards to legal matters in order to help them pursue their own work. If members would like to discuss the possibility of utilising the Legal Strategy group's expertise for their own working group, please contact [Maria](#).

Chair and Vice Chair

We are pleased to confirm that Matt Shardlow (Buglife) and Carol Day (RSPB) have been voted in as Chair and Vice-Chair of the group for 2015. On behalf of the group we extend our thanks to Victoria and Brendan for their commitment to support the group in 2015.



Evidence to the House of Lords Committee

On 3 December Link provided oral evidence to the House of Lords European Union Sub-Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment and Energy as part of its inquiry into European marine cooperation. Link submitted [written evidence](#) to the Committee earlier in the autumn.

Joint Links Marine Strategy Framework Directive meeting

Link's Marine Group met with Defra's Marine Strategy Framework Directive team on 15 December to discuss the upcoming Marine Strategy Framework Directive programmes of measures consultation which is due to be launched in the new year.

Chair and Vice Chair

We are pleased to confirm that Joan Edwards (The Wildlife Trusts) and Melissa Moore (Whale and Dolphin Conservation) have been voted in as Chair and Vice-Chair of the group for 2015. On behalf of the group we extend our thanks to Joan and Melissa for their hard work this year and their commitment to support the group in 2015.



The 25 Year Plan

Link members met with Nick Barter, Head of the Natural Capital Committee Secretariat, on 16 December to discuss members' contributions to the Natural Capital Committee's long term plan (25 years) for maintaining and improving our natural capital. Julian Harlow (Economic Advisor) and Georgina Mace (Professor at University College London) also attended the meeting, representing Defra. Their main interest was to receive well-developed restoration projects and case studies to enable them to improve their portfolio and add further value to their research.



Blueprint meeting with Defra - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) team

Members of the Blueprint for Water met with the Sustainable Drainage Systems team at the end of November to discuss the responses to their recent consultation. Defra stated they had received 401 responses, reflecting some very varied opinions, which they will reflect on carefully before they release a final report. The Blueprint group is hoping to become more involved with the SuDS team in the future in order to highlight the importance of these systems in issues such as flood prevention.

Blueprint meeting with Water UK

On 4 December Link's Blueprint for Water Group met with Water UK, which represents all major statutory water and wastewater service supply organisations in the UK, in order to continue our engagement with water companies and find synergies between the two groups. Link will be working with Water UK to create a water code document through which to educate members of the public about unflushable products and the impact they can have on the water systems, as well as trying to educate people about water saving measures.

Ofwat final determinations

The economic regulator of the water industry in England and Wales (Ofwat) announced on 12 December the final determinations for the water companies for the 2014 price review. Link's Blueprint group advised that this determination seems to deliver benefits for customers and the

environment by changing the incentive structure and encouraging innovative approaches. However it will require a change in mind-set from companies if they are going to deliver these ambitious targets and make a profit. The Blueprint group would welcome a closer dialogue on partnership working in order to help deliver these outcomes.

Chair and Vice Chair

We are pleased to confirm that Janina Gray (Salmon and Trout Association) and Kathy Hughes (WWF-UK) have been voted in as Chair and Vice-Chair of the group for 2015. Kathy will be looking after the post of Chair until Carrie Hume (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust) returns to the position in 2015.



Japanese Whaling

Link's Whales group attended a teleconference with Nigel Gooding, the UK Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC), on 4 December to discuss Japanese 'scientific whaling'.

Letter to the Minister

Link wrote to the Defra Fisheries Minister George Eustice MP highlighting a number of issues including scientific whaling, the critically endangered vaquita, and matters of EU competency.

Chair and Vice Chair

We are pleased to confirm that Jenny Lonsdale (Environmental Investigation Agency) and John Frizell (Greenpeace) have been voted in as Chair and Vice-Chair of the group for 2015. On behalf of the group we extend our thanks to Jenny and John for their commitment to support the group in 2015.



Wildlife Trade Working Group meeting

The group held its final meeting of the year on 11 December. During the meeting, the Group discussed its advocacy in the run up to the 2015 general election and the Botswana conference, where member states will report on their commitments one year on since signing the [London Declaration](#) at the Illegal Wildlife Trade summit.

Chair and Vice Chair

We are pleased to confirm that Heather Sohl (WWF) and Tania McCrea-Steele (IFAW) have been voted in as Chair and Vice-Chair of the group for 2015. On behalf of the group we extend our thanks to Heather and Tania for their hard work this year and their commitment to support the group in 2015.

