

E-bulletin February 2013

Welcome to Link's February 2013 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 [Louise](#).



Common Agriculture Policy: Pan EU advocacy targeting MEPs

Mid-March will see MEPs vote in a Plenary Session of the European Parliament on the future of the Common Agriculture Policy. In late February, Link spent a great deal of time coordinating activity of members in England as part of a Europe-wide action by NGOs to lobby MEPs ahead of this vote. This action is intended to send a message to MEPs on the key elements of the CAP debate that are supported by NGOs across Europe in the hope that this will encourage them to vote accordingly. The action also includes an e-petition which is being hosted by several Link members.

Triennial review

In early February, [Link submitted its response to Defra's triennial review of Natural England and the Environment Agency](#), and was supported by 23 member organisations. Defra has advised that it expects to publish its preliminary conclusions in April or May. The Secretary of State, Owen Paterson MP, has also responded to Link's letter regarding the triennial review to thank Link for its 'constructive engagement in the process so far' and to confirm that he would like a meeting to discuss our views.

On 6 February, Link's Director attended a dinner meeting with Paul Leinster (Chief Executive) and Lord Chris Smith (Chairman) at the Environment Agency, along with a number of other NGOs, to discuss the triennial review and other current issues. On 22 January, Link's Director and new Chair of Trustees, Victoria Chester, also attended a lunch meeting for NGOs with Dave Webster (Chief Executive) and Poul Christiansen (Chairman) at Natural England.

Ecosystem Markets Task Force

On 31 January, Link's Director attended a meeting with Ian Cheshire, Chair of the Ecosystem Markets Task Force (EMTF), set up by the Government as a key commitment in its Natural Environment White Paper. The EMTF is a business led review of opportunities arising from valuing nature correctly. Discussion focussed on the task force's forthcoming final report 'Valuing Nature: Harnessing ecology to strengthen the economy'. Link's Director will be attending the launch of the report on 5 March. More information can be found at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/>

Animal welfare meeting

On 14 February Link held a very productive meeting with members to discuss how we can better embed animal welfare into Link's work. As one of Link's five strategic objectives, we will be exploring

ways in which Link can add value to the existing work being carried out by its members, and identify issues where a collaborative approach would be particularly beneficial.

Inquiry into water quality

On 27 February the Blueprint for Water coalition gave oral evidence to the Commons Science and Technology Committee for their inquiry into water quality. Rob Collins (The Rivers Trust) spoke on behalf of the Blueprint and raised the following points:

- The Commission should adopt the proposed additional 15 ‘priority substances’ – pollutants whose emissions need to be controlled – under the Water Framework Directive;
- Controlling these substances would have benefits for people and the environment, and failure to address these substances puts at risk our compliance with the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- Controlling these substances would be in line with the Government’s commitment in the Water White Paper, *Water for Life*, which states that the UK “*must maintain our efforts on such source controls, especially in relation to emerging pollutants*”.



Rural Development Programmes

Work continued within the Agriculture Working Group to develop our thinking on priorities for and design of the next Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). More detailed analysis on the role of the RDPE in delivering for biodiversity, water, access, landscape and woodland is being prepared. Engagement with Defra on these issues continues through our involvement with stakeholder groups.

CAP briefings

Link published a [series of briefings on CAP reform for MPs](#) prior to the second round of the negotiations for the EU budget for 2014-2020. The briefings aim to raise MPs awareness of the importance of the CAP for the British countryside and cover: Rural Development Programmes; Ecological Focus Areas; Cross Compliance; and High Nature Value Farming.



Working Group meeting

On 14 February the Biodiversity Working Group held a meeting to finalise the 2013 workplan, which is centred on the implementation of *Biodiversity 2020*. This productive meeting also covered biodiversity offsetting, lead partners and the forthcoming Terrestrial Biodiversity Group meeting. The group also held their annual biodiversity bake off!

Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

On 5-6 March Nicola Hutchinson (Plantlife) will be attending a Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG) meeting on behalf of Link. At the meeting, Nicola will be speaking to Link’s papers on Lead Partners.

Meeting with Defra

Link will be meeting with Defra on 18 March to discuss resourcing for *Biodiversity 2020*. In particular, we will be discussing how the strategy will be resourced, the significance of any shortfall, and the relative NGO contribution.

Nature Improvement Area Annual Forum

On 26 March Kate Hand (Link) will be attending Natural England's Nature Improvement Area (NIA) Annual Forum. The Forum will hear from representatives from each NIA, as well as the NIA judging panel and contributors to the Making Space for Nature report.



Habitats and Birds

Simplification of guidance

Link has responded to Defra's consultation on draft [overarching guidance](#) for the Habitats Directive and the [stocktake of existing guidance](#). In the core guidance response, Link expresses concern that, of the eighteen recommendations proposed in Link's consultation response on draft guidance on the application of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, only four were reflected in the final guidance document. The responses also urge the Government to ensure core guidance is compatible with EU guidance.




Invasive Non-Native Species

Meetings in Brussels

On 21 February Carrie Hume (WWT) represented Link at a meeting in Brussels with Valentino Bastino from the Biodiversity Unit of the European Commission. The meeting was set up at the suggestion of the European Commissioner for the Environment, in response to a Link letter regarding Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS). Whilst in Brussels, Carrie Hume also met with Martina Mlinaric, at the European Environmental Bureau, to discuss how Link could work more closely with EU colleagues around the forthcoming European Regulations on Invasive Alien Species (the Commission's preferred term for INNS).

Future of the group

Heidi Richardson, Link's intern working on INNS, completed her three month's work in January. Heidi has been extremely productive and has worked with the INNS Task and Finish Group to make significant progress on the issue. We would like to thank Heidi for all her hard work. Link is now seeking further funding to ensure that the group can continue its work, especially around development of the EU Directive and review of the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain.



Land Use Planning

Growth and Infrastructure Bill

Link has [circulated a briefing paper](#) to peers in advance of report stage of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill in the House of Lords. Link is concerned that the Bill will remove some of the protection from National Parks and AONBs, and that it risks degrading the quality of decision-making in local planning authorities. In line with Link's earlier briefing papers on the Bill, this briefing calls for the removal of clauses 1, 8, 14 and 24, and the amendment of clauses 5, 13 and 14.

Taylor review

Link has [submitted a response](#) to the consultation on the Review of Planning Practice Guidance. Link welcomes the emphasis the review group has placed on the production of a single, user friendly guidance portal, and calls for a revised timetable for the introduction of new guidance and the cancellation of existing guidance.

Environmental Impact Assessment Directive review

Link will be submitting a response to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the EIA Directive Review in March.

Planning Red Tape Challenge

A Link representative will be attending a DCLG stakeholder meeting on the [Planning Administration Red Tape Challenge](#) on 6 March.



Marine

127 March

Link was among hundreds of demonstrators who attended a march in support of 127 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) for English seas. Organised by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), in association with Sea Life and supported by Hugh's Fish Fight and the British Sub-Aqua Club, the rally was set up in response to the Government consultation which plans to designate 31 MCZs, rather than the 127 needed to ensure a healthy future for our seas.

After a colourful procession from the South Bank to the Houses of Parliament a series of speeches were given outside Parliament including from Fish Fight campaigner and celebrity chef, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Chair of MCS, Martin Spray CBE.

Marine Conservation Zone Public Consultation

Link organised a series of teleconferences during February for member organisations to discuss a joint response to Defra's public consultation on its plans to designate 31 MCZs in 2013. Link is currently formulating a response which will be available for members to comment and sign on to during March.

Letter to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

Link wrote to the MMO on the 22 February to express concern that the marine planning process in England has increasingly started to move away from the commitments and support for the ecosystem approach expressed in early engagement with stakeholders, towards a heavily development-focussed viewpoint.



Blueprint for Water coalition and PR14 meeting

On 18 March the Blueprint for Water Coalition will be meeting in Birmingham for a coalition meeting, followed by a meeting on the 2014 price review of water (PR14) and Customer Challenge Groups. The working group meeting will provide an opportunity to agree the Blueprint for Water 2013 - 14 workplan and to discuss updates on the draft Water Bill, the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) stakeholder group and the Abstraction Reform Advisory Group.

SuDS stakeholder group

Carrie Hume (WWT) represented Link at the first Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) SuDS stakeholder workshop on 13 February. The workshop was on the implementation of SuDS requirements provided for in Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010). Three task and finish groups were proposed at the meeting as a way to drive SuDS delivery forward and the Blueprint was assigned to one on national standards. Attendees included local authorities, water companies, Internal Drainage Boards and the Home Builders Federation.

UKTAG response

Link has submitted a response to the UK Technical Advisory Group (UKTAG) consultation on phosphorus and biological standards. The response highlights the need for robust data on the benefits of controlling phosphorus in running waters and for practically-orientated research to assess the effects of nutrient reduction programmes.

Water Resource Management Plans

Link will be drafting top lines on what should be included in water company Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs) in the coming months. WRMPs look ahead 25 years and show important projections of future demand for water and how water companies aim to meet this demand.

Draft Water Bill

The Blueprint for Water will be meeting with key MPs to discuss the draft Water Bill during the coming months, focusing on our concerns around the timetable for abstraction reform, increasing water efficiency and giving Ofwat a primary duty to sustainable development.



Meeting with Defra

Link's Whales Working group met with Defra marine biodiversity officers and Defra legal advisers on 4 February to discuss a range of cetacean issues including Norway, Japan and Iceland's whaling programmes, The Sakhalin Energy development, Greenland's aboriginal subsistence whaling quota and this year's International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee meeting.

Greenland

Link's Whales Working Group is expecting to meet with the Danish Embassy shortly to discuss the issue of Greenland's aboriginal subsistence whaling quota.

Southern Ocean Whaling

Anti-whaling activists have reported that a Japanese whaling ship has rammed two of their vessels, in the Antarctic seas. The marine conservation group Sea Shepherd called on Australia to send a naval vessel to the area after claims that the whaling fleet's factory ship, the Nisshin Maru, had collided with two of its vessels including its flagship, the Steve Irwin. Australia's bid to stop Japan's Antarctic whale hunts at the International Court of Justice was discussed at Link's meeting with Defra on 4 February.

New Chair and Vice Chair

Following December's election draw for Chair, the two candidates - Vassili Papastavrou (International Fund for Animal Welfare) and Mark Simmonds (Humane Society International) - have agreed that Vassili will act as Chair for the remainder of the year, and Mark will act as Vice Chair. Vassili will lead on matters relating to whaling and the IWC and Mark will lead on domestic and European matters. John Frizell (Greenpeace) kindly agreed to stand down as Vice Chair in the interest of giving the Whales group an agreed leadership team for 2013.



Working Group meeting

On 11 February the Wildlife Trade Working Group met to agree the 2013 workplan and feedback from Link's meeting with enforcement authorities in December last year. Discussions also focused on the Environmental Audit Committee report on wildlife crime and preparations for the JLG meeting held on 14 February.

Joint NGO Liaison Group meeting

Several members of the Wildlife Trade Working Group attended the meeting of the Joint NGO Liaison Group (JLG) on 14 February. Richard Benyon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Natural Environment, attended for part of the meeting to discuss priority issues for the UK at the CITES Conference of the Parties taking place in Thailand in March 2013. Tom Quinn (IFAW), on behalf of Link, shared some collective views with the Minister and urged the UK Government to be a strong leader in CITES as it has been in the past.



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