

Q2 Report April - June 2011

In this issue....

- Letter from the Chair
- Working Groups
 - Agriculture
 - Biodiversity
 - Land Use Planning
 - Marine Legislation
 - Natural Environment White Paper
 - Water
 - Whales
 - Wildlife Trade
- Secretariat News
- Joint Links News
 - Scotland
 - Northern Ireland
 - Wales

“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...*

Friends,

The new Natural Environment White Paper has landed. This quarter the Government made good on its promise to reveal the eagerly awaited ‘NEWP’. This was heralded as an in-depth policy on valuing nature. However, we also saw the Government’s promised empowerment of communities under its Localism Bill start to wobble. We ended the quarter taking these and other developments into account as the Link Management Committee reviewed progress against Link’s 2010-12 strategy.

Link’s NEWP Taskforce welcomed *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, the first nature white paper in 20 years. Having created good working relationships with Defra and Ministers, Link released its *key tests* of the NEWP’s stated priorities to protect biodiversity, account for nature’s value in the economy and meet global conservation agreements. The Task Force has started analysing the NEWP’s 92 commitments and is planning how to work with Link’s various working groups to shape and measure the NEWP’s implementation.

Hard on the heels of the ‘pro-growth’ budget in March the Government revealed its expansive cost cutting exercise, the *Red Tape Challenge*. In theory, under this deliberately populist call to cut excessive and unnecessary regulation and hence, relieve economic burden, 278 environmental laws and regulations, such as the Wildlife and Countryside, and Climate Change Acts, could be cut. In June Link sent a letter to Business Secretary, Vince Cable MP, voicing our concern for a sensible review of regulations and signed by 27 Link member Chief Executives. Link asked for heightened consideration for those regulations that are required by EU law and highlighted the need for a fair, democratic and timely review.

Link’s *Greenest Planning Ever Coalition* continued to track, influence and seek to amend the Localism Bill with signs that our aim to champion genuine sustainable development as the basis for future planning is being taken seriously in parliamentary debate. The coalition tabled amendments and produced briefings to highlight areas of key importance: *the right of appeal; sustainable development and clause 124 (financial incentives for planning); strategic planning and the duty to cooperate*; and, *neighbourhood planning*. In June Link’s event in the House of Lords with Baroness Young introduced Link’s tabled amendments, and coalition members briefed peers on the detail.

On 22 June Link’s Management Committee and staff used our annual Away Day to look at the changing external agenda, the fresh challenges one year into the new Government, and how well Link has been doing working to its strategy. We’re pulling our ideas together and will share our insights with members in late summer and early autumn.

Thank you for your continuing work and support, and best wishes for your summer break.

Paul de Zylva, Chair

Agriculture

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*Chair: Abi Bunker, RSPB
Vice Chair: Ian Woodhurst, CPRE
Secretary: Kirsten Loveday*

“Works to support and deliver a sustainable high quality, multi-functional rural environment through influencing and monitoring policy on rural development, agri-environment, bioenergy, and animal welfare standards”

Over the quarter Link’s Agriculture Working Group (AWG) continues to lobby for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to be reformed to reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmental public goods, such as clean water, healthy soil and wildlife conservation. In June the European Commission announced its EU budget (Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020) which included a cut in real terms to the CAP. Since this announcement, Link has been working with the Joint Links to produce a [briefing](#) on CAP reform and EU budget which was sent to MPs in July.

On 10 May the Defra published its [Survey of Land Managed under the Campaign for the Farmed Environment \(CFE\)](#). Link members were concerned with the results which showed that 76 per cent of farmers had not adopted voluntary environmental protection measures which aimed to replace ‘set aside’ abolished in 2007. Link wrote to Jim Paice MP, Minister for Agriculture and Food, to highlight the results of this survey. The Minister replied outlining his intentions to review the campaign and welcoming the opportunity to meet with Link in the near future.

Link attended the publication of the independent Farm Regulation Task Force’s [report](#) which was presented to the Minister on 17 May. The report reviewed current farming regulations and made 200+ recommendations aiming to ease the burden of red tape on farmers and food producers. In June the Environment and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee held an oral evidence session on this report to evaluate whether the [recommendations](#) can be implemented in practice.

Biodiversity

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*Chair: Nicola Hutchinson, Plantlife
Vice Chair: Miles King, The Grasslands Trust
Secretary: Kirsten Loveday*

“Works to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by working to improve the UK BAP process and seeks to ensure that the England Biodiversity Strategy is fully implemented”

Link’s Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) continues to work towards the launch of the new England Biodiversity Strategy (EBS), which is expected to be published by Defra in the coming months. Earlier this year, the Group developed a [position statement](#) on the EBS, calling for accountability for annual progress towards the 2020 target to reside with the Biodiversity Minister. This quarter saw the group attended a series of meetings with Defra to compound ideas and help shape and develop the policy.

In May Link attended the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee meeting, which included discussion on the future UK framework and governance structures. Also in May the UK Biodiversity Partnership published an updated version of the [UK Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket](#). The BWG welcomed this report as a useful tool in assessing broad changes to the restoration and protection of the UK’s species and habitats.



*Acting Chair: Paul Miner, CPRE
Acting Vice Chair: Lee Bruce, Woodland Trust
Secretary: Kate Hand*

“Works to conserve the natural and historic environment by working to improve the national planning system for the benefit of biodiversity and landscape”

The *Greenest Planning Ever coalition* (GPE) has been following the Localism Bill closely through parliament. The Coalition has influenced parliamentarians through its briefings, amendments and meetings with individual Ministers, MPs and peers.

Before Report stage in the House of Commons in May, GPE met with Greg Clark MP, Minister of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to discuss the Localism Bill, including sustainable development, the Duty to Cooperate, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) and rights of appeal. The coalition produced a number of briefings for MPs including an *overall briefing* that additionally addressed the need for a measurable and enforceable Duty to Cooperate, and the need to ensure that neighbourhood plans provide a fair and transparent approach to community participation, that properly considers local and wider impacts and is consistent with higher level plans.

As the Bill moved into the Lords, Link met with a number of peers, including Baroness Hanham, Minister at DCLG and Government lead for the Bill in the Lords. The Minister recognised the strength of concern around new clause 124 (financial incentives in planning), and that in relation to neighbourhood planning there is a danger of local plans being built around single issues. There was also a useful discussion on the Duty to Cooperate, and the Minister suggested that we return to discuss sustainable development in more detail after Committee Stage in the Lords.

For Second Reading in the Lords, GPE produced a *briefing* identifying our key issues for peers, and for Committee Stage GPE has provided briefings to peers on *the right of appeal; sustainable development and clause 124 (financial incentives for planning); strategic planning and the duty to cooperate; and neighbourhood planning.*

On 15 June the group held a briefing session for peers in the House of Lords to emphasize issues and strengthen support for their amendments. Baroness Young introduced Link’s vision for the progress of the Localism Bill and coalition members gave short speeches on tabled amendments followed by discussion of key issues by peers.

During the quarter, the Land Use Planning Working Group welcomed Paul Miner (CPRE) as the new Acting Chair whilst extending a warm thank you to Simon Marsh (RSPB) for all his hard work, who stepped down from the role. As Paul was the vice chair Link was also delighted to welcome Lee Bruce, Woodland Trust as the new Acting Vice Chair.

The LUPWG continue to focus efforts of the National Planning Policy Framework and eagerly awaited its *launch*. This document, alongside the Localism Bill, offers the opportunity to ensure sustainable development is recognised as the purpose of planning, a critical aim for the group. The LUPWG are also taking forward discussions on future best practice guidance on planning with a number of NGO planning organisations.

Marine

© Sally Sharrock

*Chair: Joan Edwards, The Wildlife Trusts
Vice Chair: Sharon Thompson, RSPB
Secretary: Fiona Llewellyn*

“Works to ensure better protection of marine wildlife and effective management of our seas by seeking the full implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act”

This quarter the Marine Working Group published and distributed the second edition in Link’s series of Marine Parliamentary Bulletins, *Healthy Seas: Why we need Marine Protection Areas*. This edition highlights the need for a spectrum of protection levels throughout the Marine Protected Area (MPA) network, including highly protected sites.

In May the group met with the Environment Minister, Richard Benyon MP, to discuss the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Project and the UK’s commitment to establishing an ecologically coherent network of MPAs by 2012. Additionally, Link attended a meeting with Defra officials to discuss a number of specific concerns with MCZ progress, including mobile species, sites being lost and the use of socio-economic data. Link has since written to both Defra and the Minister to reiterate these concerns and provide specific examples of where proposed MCZs are currently being lost throughout the network, as requested by Defra. Furthermore Link continues to maintain regular liaison with Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to discuss the progress of the MCZ Project, which is now entering its final phase.

This quarter Link completed four *briefings* in response to *Charting Progress 2: An assessment of the state of UK seas*, which was published by the UK Marine Monitoring and Assessment Strategy last July. Following an initial assessment of Charting Progress 2 (CP2), and the *Government’s Commentary on CP2*, the Marine Working Group felt that a number of key messages were not being reflected accurately or at all. This was of particular concern to Link, as CP2 is to be used by the Government as the evidence base for the state of UK seas. In June Link submitted the briefings in response to the MMO’s *Strategic Scoping Report*, which based a lot of its information on the findings of CP2. Going forward Link will be using the briefings to highlight concerns with CP2 and to illustrate the *true* state of the UK’s seas.

Natural Environment White Paper

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*Chair: Paul Wilkinson, The Wildlife Trusts
Vice Chair: Alice Hardiman, RSPB
Secretary: Kirsten Loveday*

“The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) Task Force seeks to influence the White Paper and its outcomes to empower the recovery of England’s natural environment”

In April Link attended a positive meeting with Oliver Letwin MP, Minister for Government Policy to discuss key concerns for the NEWP. At the meeting, the Minister asked those attending to produce a paper on institutional frameworks to support nature’s recovery. Throughout the quarter the Task Force advocated our priorities by meeting with MPs including Shadow Secretary of State, Mary Creagh MP, Andrew George MP, the Minister Richard Benyon MP. Link also met with senior Defra officials in the lead up to the launch of the White Paper.

The White Paper, entitled *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, was published on 7 June by Caroline Spelman MP. A panel of Minister across Government also attended the launch including, Greg Clark (CLG), Norman Baker (DfT) and Richard Benyon. Link were then approached by the EFRA Select Committee to give *oral evidence* on initial reactions to the NEWP which Martin Harper (RSPB) gave on behalf of Link. Other witnesses on the panel included Defra, National Trust, Pavan Sukhdev (author of *TEEB*), PricewaterhouseCoopers and the National Farmers Union. The panel highlighted the funding strategy, the Natural Capital Committee, delivery of the NEWP, the links between Local Nature Partnerships and a national strategy and guidance for reforms for the private sector as areas where the EFRA Committee should investigate further.

Water

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*Chair: Robert Cunningham, RSPB
Vice Chair: Janina Gray, Salmon & Trout Association
Secretary: Kate Hand*

“Works to restore the ecology of the UK’s rivers, lakes and wetlands by working to ensure the delivery of the objectives of the Water Framework Directive”

This quarter the *Blueprint for Water Coalition* continued to discuss and implement their strategy for the Water White Paper, due to be released in December 2011. The paper focuses on the challenges for the water industry in meeting demands for sustainable water supplies in the face of population growth, climate change and improving facilities and infrastructure while keeping the natural resource affordable.

Earlier this year the Group worked towards recruiting Parliamentary Champions to promote the *Blueprint for Water 2010* in the House of Commons. Our existing champions are Anne McIntosh MP and Martin Horwood MP.

In May the coalition *responded* to Defra’s consultation on River Basin Planning Guidance Volume 3. The response emphasised the need for updated guidance and addressed a variety of other issues including the approach to objectives and reporting, the involvement of stakeholders, strategic planning and regulation, and enforcement.

In June the Chair and Secretary of the group attended the Wetland Future Conference. The conference included sessions on best practice in wetland management, the link with green infrastructure, a new tool for assessing the impacts of climate change on wetlands and forthcoming policy and regulatory developments. Thanks to the WWF, the Blueprint also had a presence at July’s Future Water conference.

Members have also been focussing on the implications of the UK drought and have met with Natural England and Defra to support planning.

Wildlife trade

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*Chair: Cathy Williamson, WDCS
Vice Chair: Matt Collis, IFAW
Secretary: Jodie Bettis*

“Works to improve the conservation of wild flora and fauna threatened by international trade by seeking to ensure the proper implementation of CITES”

The Link Wildlife Trade group were pleased to hear from the Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, that central Government funding had been guaranteed for the *National Wildlife Crime Unit* (NWCU). The £150,000 grant is essential to the NWCU, established in 2006, as funding is primarily provided by the Home Office and Defra.

On 8 June Home Secretary, Theresa May MP, *announced* the creation of the new *National Crime Agency* (NCA) to tackle organised crime. This will include a new Border Policing Command division that will be responsible for the prevention and investigation of wildlife crime, working with the NWCU. The plans for the NCA indicate that new legislation will be necessary to support its intended scope and will require introduction by spring 2012, leading to the NCA being fully operational by the end of 2013.

Link’s Wildlife Trade Working Group met on 9 June to discuss developments in CITES enforcement, the new National Crime Agency and plans to conduct an airport campaign that promotes dedicated space for dissemination of wildlife trade information to travellers. Members of the group also attended meetings of the Joint NGO Liaison Group on CITES in May and July, convened to primarily discuss the *sixty-first meeting of the CITES Standing Committee* in Geneva in August.

Whales

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Chair: Mark Simmonds, WDCS
Secretary: Fiona Llewellyn

“Works to ensure better protection of cetaceans including through the reform of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) into a conservation body”

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

The main focus for the Whales Working Group this quarter was the **63rd Annual meeting** of the International Whaling Commission (IWC63), which began proceedings in June.

Once again Link was awarded two Link/NGO places on the UK’s delegation to the IWC. In light of this, in April, Link met with Defra and the new UK Commissioner, Richard Pullen, to discuss a number of IWC-related issues, including preparations for IWC63 and the continued whaling of Iceland, Norway, Greenland and Japan.

This was followed by a meeting in May with the Environment Minister, Richard Beynon MP, which was also attended by Richard Pullen and a number of Defra officials. Discussions again included the continued whaling by a number of IWC member nations, as well as Iceland’s accession to the EU, corruption at the IWC and the need to strengthen the IWC’s conservation agenda. Link’s concerns were all met with support from the Minister and Defra and Link was very pleased to learn of the governance reform proposals being put forward by the UK Government at IWC63.

In June number of Link members attended the IWC’s Scientific Committee meeting, which took place in Tromsø, Norway. A report of the Scientific Committee meeting will be considered at IWC63. Ahead of the meeting Link sent a briefing to Defra officials; ***NGO briefing to the UK Government on key issues for IWC63***, highlighting priorities and key areas of concern for the meeting.

UK cetaceans

In April Link hosted its second meeting on the issues affecting cetaceans in UK waters. The meeting was widely attended by Link members and other NGOs concerned with cetacean conservation. Discussions focused on the development of the UK’s Marine Protected Area (MPA) network and the protection it stands to provide for cetaceans.

As a result of discussions, Link sent a ***letter*** to the Chair of the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Project Science Advisory Panel, Dr Peter Ryder, to highlight major concerns about the exclusion of cetaceans as features for which MCZs are designated. A response was later received from Dr Ryder, in which he stated, ***“Cetaceans are excluded only to the extent that a relevant case for their inclusion has yet to be made.”*** Link continues to push for the protection of these species through both MCZ designation and the wider MPA network.



Update from: Kate MacColl

Scottish Environment LINK (SEL)

In April, SEL's Local Governance taskforce published a report, [Single Outcome Agreements and Action for People, Places and Community](#) which explored how action on local priorities by local government and community planning partnerships (CPPs), through the outcomes based approach between central and local government, can maintain and enhance progress on sustainable development, tackling climate change, and the environment.

The Scottish election saw two SEL taskforces asking potential MSPs to pledge their support for the environment. Save Scottish Seas by SEL's Marine Taskforce asked candidates to make sure the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 delivers healthy, productive and biologically diverse Scottish seas, whilst the Wildlife Proclamation 2011 from SEL's Wildlife forum asked prospective MSPs to pledge to make Scotland a better place for wildlife. The result of the election on 5 May was an overall majority for the SNP in the Scottish Parliament, creating a new political landscape in Scotland, where previously no political party has held the majority of seats.

SEL's Marine taskforce, in preparation for its response to several new consultations, met with Marine Scotland to discuss the National Marine Plan and its associated Strategic Environment Assessment; and separately, to receive an update on the new seal licensing regime and discuss the seal haul-out site consultation. Comments raised by the taskforce with Marine Scotland on earlier versions of the draft National Marine Plan have now been reflected in the pre-consultation document, for example, marine conservation being treated as a cross cutting theme through inclusion of an environmental section in each sectors chapter.

SEL published its [Carbon Accounts](#) in April, a detailed report on LINK's carbon emissions during the financial year 2010-11. This is the third year SEL has published carbon accounts, which this year include new measures of emissions per employee, and are now benchmarked using the Carbon Trust's benchmarking tool. SEL Agriculture also published [Public Goods and Agriculture in Scotland](#), the fifth in the SEL's Agriculture Taskforces File Notes on the CAP reform in May.

Update from: Sue Christie

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)

NIEL has continued its political work promoting its environmental manifesto and encouraging collaboration amongst eNGOs through a major conference with the Environment Minister for Northern Ireland, Alex Attwood MLA, and most of the Environment Committee on 22 June. Current environmental topics were discussed in a 'roundtable' session and results are now being used to refine NIEL's input to the Programme for Government, which sets the agenda for the next four years. The new Environment Minister and the Chair of the Environment Committee are both from parties with 'pro-environment' manifestos and strong statements on their support for the environment, so NIEL is hopeful of action in the coming term.

Work continues on work to promote collaboration amongst eNGOs to make best use of increasingly tighter resources and refine NIEL's 'messaging' to push environment up the public and political agendas. Planning remains a high priority in several manifestations and NIEL is preparing for the launch of the NI National Ecosystem Assessment in the autumn.

Update from: Susan Evans

Wales Environment Link (WEL)

The Biodiversity and Land Use Working Groups have been focussing on CAP reform and submitted a WEL statement to the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes, in advance of his 5 July statement on the subject. Members have signed up to the recent Joint Links statement on CAP reform, to be sent to all UK MPs. The two Groups have also discussed Glastir Woodlands and the wider 100,000 ha woodland creation target for Wales, including planting opportunity maps created by Forestry Commission Wales. Members of the Natural Environment Framework Working Group met with Welsh Government Officials in May to discuss the possibility of a single environmental body in Wales.

The Cross Party Group for Biodiversity, which WEL supports, has been re-established in the Assembly with all party support.

The Marine Working Group, in conjunction with the Planning Working Group, produced a response to the Marine Planning consultation, which was submitted in May. In June the Marine Working Group launched a marine photography competition, as part of the Marine Campaign, and several AMs attended the launch event. Members of the Marine Working Group have been active on the Stakeholder and Citizens Engagement Group for the Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zone project, the Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group and in coordinating environmental representation on the three regional Inshore Fisheries Groups.

WEL was sorry to say goodbye to their Advocacy Officer, Laura Wilkinson, this quarter. Laura has taken up a post at RSPB Cymru. Recruitment is underway, details can be found at the [WEL website](#).

Link Secretariat



Update from: Sam Bickerstaff

Link's Management Committee met in June for its annual away day meeting which was held in Bristol at Folly Farm, an Avon Wildlife Trust site. The Committee discussed forthcoming advocacy plans and developments in the political arena concerning the conservation agenda and our key policy areas. The Committee also reviewed Link's half yearly accounts and plans for the forthcoming membership subscription review. If you are a member and would like to get involved and provide feedback on the review, please contact [Jodie](#).

Link was pleased to welcome a new associate member ClientEarth in May. Link now has 36 members and 5 official partners. ClientEarth is an environmental law organisation addressing issues such as deforestation, biodiversity protection, and the transparency and enforcement of environmental law, and is a founding member of Link's Legal Strategy Group.

In May our Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator, Joanna Fisher and her husband welcomed their new baby girl, Lara, into the world. Many congratulations from all at Link and we look forward to meeting the new arrival soon but we aren't expecting Jo back at her desk until April 2012. In the interim all marine or whales enquiries should be directed to [Fiona](#).

The Link Secretariat continues to work apace across all of Link's policy areas. Strengthening our team earlier in the year has allowed for work on the Red Tape Challenge and our assessment of the Government's claims on being the 'greenest Government ever'.