

Registered number: 03889519
Charity number: 1107460

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
(A company limited by guarantee)

UNAUDITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

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**REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY, ITS TRUSTEES AND ADVISERS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013**

Trustees

Amy Coyte, Chair
Jeremy Biggs, Deputy Chair
David Lind, Treasurer
Sue Armstrong-Brown
Victoria Chester (resigned 1 November 2013)
Nicola Hutchinson (appointed 4 December 2013)
Helen Meech
Paul Miner
Hazel Norman

Company registered number

03889519

Charity registered number

1107460

Registered office

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London
SE1 7TP

Company secretary and Director

Elaine King

Independent Examiner

Simon Erskine FCA FCIE DChA
MHA MacIntyre Hudson
Chartered Accountants
New Bridge Street House
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Bankers

The Co-operative Bank
PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

Nationwide International
5-11 St George's Street
Douglas
Isle of Man
IM99 1RN

Solicitors

Russell-Cooke Solicitors
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London
SW15 6AB

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TRUSTEES' REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

The Trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the year ended 31 December 2013.

Structure, governance and management

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 7 December 1999 and registered as a charity on 5 January 2005.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In 2007 the Memorandum and Articles of Association were reviewed, both to ensure compliance with the Companies Act (2006) and Charities Act (2006), and following a number of years using the previous Memorandum and Articles of Association which had raised the need for further clarification. Under those Articles, the members of the Board of Trustees are elected by a postal vote in advance or by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees must retire at the third Annual General Meeting after that at which he or she was first elected, and are eligible for re-election for a further term ending on the sixth Annual General Meeting after their first election. The Treasurer must retire at the Annual General Meeting every three years but may stand for re-election with no maximum term of office.

Objectives and activities

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together environmental voluntary organisations in the UK united by their common interest in the conservation and enjoyment of the natural and historic environment. Our aim is to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the voluntary sector through collaboration. We have 42 member organisations which collectively employ 11,000 full-time staff, have the help of 175,000 volunteers in the UK and the support of over 8 million people.

Established in 1980, Link exists to further the conservation, protection and enhancement of wildlife and landscape and to further the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside by the public by facilitating collaboration between voluntary organisations in the UK. It does this in the following ways:

- Providing secretariat support for a number of working groups addressing various policy issues;
- Convening and coordinating joint meetings with statutory conservation agencies, Government officials, departments and ministries;
- Coordinating environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO) representation on external fora;
- Preparing and publishing joint policy statements and press releases;
- Organising events such as seminars and conferences on particular policy areas;
- Facilitating exchange of information and ideas between members;
- Representing Link and its members to external bodies including Government and other stakeholders.

Statement of public benefit

The Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link confirm that the organisation has Charitable Purposes pursuant to the Charities Act 2006. The Trustees believe that there are clear and identifiable public benefits arising from the pursuit of Wildlife and Countryside Link's aims and objectives, and that these benefits are freely available to the general public without restriction.

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Link Strategy

A review of Link's operational strategy - discussed in detail in the following sections - has found that Link's members value the service objectives that the organisation works towards, including the provision of: a professional team with a willingness to respond to member needs; information sharing and networking; an accessible place for joint policy formulation and advocacy; a strength of combined voice; effective working groups; and a single point of contact for Government.

However, members also identified key areas where Link could improve its ways of working, such as being more proactive, focussing more deeply on a smaller number of priority issues, and working to longer strategic timeframes. It also became clear that members have very diverse needs and expectations. During 2013, we therefore explored ways in which Link might build on its strengths and maximise its effectiveness for its members and for the natural environment, particularly in the context of the challenges facing the UK environment sector as a whole, such as recession, changes to funding of NGOs, short-term politics and public scepticism towards the environment. This work was carried out with Steve Cant, a management consultant from the Worshipful Company of Management Consultants, working on a pro bono basis. The work helped Link to secure funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, specifically to develop a Five Year Plan for Link, in collaboration with Link trustees, staff and members. The Foundation has supported Link for a number of years - primarily through funding for our marine project work - and recognises the important role played by Link in supporting the work of its members and representing their views to Government. The work will be carried out in 2014 with a view to taking forward a Five Year Plan, from January 2015.

AGM and annual debate

Link's Annual General Meeting took place on 4 December 2013 at the Zoological Society of London. The agenda included a Working Group Chairs and Vice Chairs discussion on Link's priorities for 2014/15.

The AGM also saw the appointment of Amy Coyte as Chair of Trustees. Already a Link Trustee and Director of Communications at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Amy took on the role of Acting Chair following the departure of Link's former Chair, Victoria Chester, who stepped down to pursue a new career. During her tenure Victoria made a huge impact on the organisation, bringing about significant change and inspiring all those around her. Nicola Hutchinson, Head of Conservation Programmes for England and Wales at Plantlife, also joined the Board of Trustees during 2013.

Following the AGM, Link hosted a debate entitled 'UK natural environment: evidence based policy or policy-based evidence?' The debate, open to Link members and other interested parties, explored the relationship between policy formulation and evidence.

The lively and thought-provoking debate was chaired by Professor David Macdonald, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Department of Zoology at Oxford University, and involved a panel of experts as follows: Dr Mark Avery (Independent environmental expert); Dr Peter Brotherton (Deputy Chief Scientist, Natural England); Dr Gemma Harper (Deputy Director for Animal & Plant Health Evidence and Analysis, and Chief Social Researcher, Defra); Professor Susan Owens (Professor of Environment and Policy, University of Cambridge); and Professor Bill Sutherland (Professor of Conservation Biology, University of Cambridge).

After the event, guests joined us for a drinks reception, sponsored by the British Ecological Society as part of its Centenary Year celebrations.

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Ways of working in 2013

In 2013 Link provided support for eight working groups on the following policy areas:

- Agriculture (Chair, Abi Bunker (RSPB); Vice Chair, Ian Woodhurst (CPRE))
- Biodiversity (Chair, Nicola Hutchinson (Plantlife); Vice Chair, vacant)
- Land Use Planning (Chair, Paul Miner (CPRE)/Victoria Bankes-Price (Woodland Trust); Vice Chair, Brendan Costelloe (RSPB))
- Legal Strategy (Chair, Matt Shardlow (Buglife); Vice Chair, Carol Day)
- Marine (Chair, Joan Edwards (Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Sharon Thompson (RSPB))
- Water (Chair, Carrie Hume (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust); Vice Chair, Janina Gray (Salmon & Trout Association))
- Whales (Chair, Vassili Papastavrou, International Fund for Animal Welfare; Vice Chair, Mark Simmonds (Humane Society International))
- Wildlife Trade (Chair, Heather Sohl (WWF); Vice Chair, Mark Jones (Humane Society International))

Link also continued to operate two Task and Finish Groups: on Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and Natural Values. Link's Habitats and Birds Directives Task and Finish Group, established in 2011 to respond to Defra's review of the implementation of the two Directives, continued as a virtual group in order to share information on, and respond to, work by Defra stemming from the review's report.

Progress towards Link's strategic objectives

Link's strategic objectives for 2010 – 2015 comprise five 'policy' objectives that represent the collective aims of our members, and four 'service' objectives which we are pursuing as a membership organisation.

1. To present an integrated vision for sustainable land and water use that promotes effective mechanisms for supporting landscape-scale natural and historic environment conservation

Link is committed to an integrated vision for sustainable land and water use, and has pursued a variety of mechanisms for achieving this.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the biggest single lever for delivering environmental enhancement in the UK, and Link has undertaken an active advocacy programme in this area. This work is led by our Agriculture Working Group, which has a long-standing commitment to reform the CAP to become a European Sustainable Land Management system. Following publication of our position statement on CAP in November 2011, work in 2013 concentrated on disseminating the key messages from this position to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

In January, the group held a meeting with Defra to present its initial thoughts on the New Environment Land Management Schemes (NELMS). Link provided a paper to Defra, outlining its views, and convened a meeting in February to discuss the issue in more detail. The same month, Link produced a series of briefings for MPs on CAP reform, setting out what we believe to be the overarching requirements for the new CAP framework, and describing how these new requirements should be turned into specific measures for UK farmers and land managers. The issues covered included Rural Development Programmes, Greening, Cross Compliance and High Nature Value farming systems.

In March, Link took part in Pan EU actions targeted at MEPs ahead of critical decisions on the CAP. Link coordinated members signing an open letter to all MEPs in Europe – setting out what the NGO community would like to see the CAP deliver. The letter was signed by 257 NGOs across Europe, 27 of which were from the UK and 17 of which were Link members.

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The EU action also included a postcard sent to UK MEPs, summarising the key voting decisions in the plenary which would result in a more nature friendly CAP. Link secured the support of 16 UK NGOs, all of which were Link members. An e-action campaign (Farming for Nature) also urged the public to send an email to their local MEPs. This was supported by 11 UK NGOs and coordinated by the Joint Link organisations across the UK. With both these initiatives, the UK delivered the greatest commitment of any country involved, in terms of numbers of organisations supporting the action.

In total, the campaign resulted in over one million emails being sent to MEPs across Europe. And in the UK, our collective efforts resulted in over 18,000 people contacting their MEP.

Additional work in March included a press release from the Joint Links, supported by 11 Link members, issued in the days ahead of the Plenary vote on the CAP. And at the end of the month, Link coordinated publication of a Joint Links advertorial in The Times, in a supplement on Sustainable Farming. The advertorial, supported by 14 Link members, called on the Secretary of State, Owen Paterson MP, and his counterparts across the UK, to lead the way in creating a CAP that secures real improvements in Environmental Quality.

Link also wrote to the Secretary of State to highlight our key recommendations, which included the maximum transfer of funds between Pillar one and Pillar two, effective greening of Pillar one and prioritising agri-environment schemes within the Pillar two budget.

Link held a number of meetings with Defra officials during this crucial period, in which we advocated our views on key agriculture issues. This included meeting with Defra's Directors, Robin Mortimer and Sarah Hendry, in June, to discuss Agri-Environment Schemes and the Rural Development Programme for England, respectively. In August, Link's Director attended a Ministerial stakeholder event, on implementing the CAP, led by the Secretary of State. This was followed by a similar event in September, which was attended by Abi Bunker, Chair of Link's Agriculture Working Group. A Joint Links briefing on modulation and co-financing was also submitted in August to UK MEPs, resulting in targeted action from the Joint Links and follow-up discussions with key MEPs.

In May, Link outlined its position on Food Security in its publication *Sustainable and Secure: 10 steps for the future of food*. An advocacy plan for this work was developed in June, following a meeting with Sustain and the Food Ethics Council, and in October Link met with Defra to communicate key messages in the Link report. In December, Link submitted a response to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee's inquiry into Food Security.

In July, Link issued a press release in response to Defra launching its Agri-tech strategy. Link stressed that any agricultural technology should not repeat the mistakes of the past by prioritising increasing food production over environmental sustainability. Link also engaged with a number of MPs that were commenting on the issue.

The group met throughout the year to plan and develop its work. In April, the group held a general meeting to discuss progress on the work plan, along with identifying priorities for the rest of the year. And in August, the group's annual away day meeting was hosted by the National Trust at its Ebworth Centre in Gloucestershire.

In October, Link submitted evidence to the EFRA select Committee inquiry into CAP implementation, and our report *Sustainable and Secure* was submitted as part of the EU's sustainable food consultation.

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November was a particularly busy month for the group, following publication of Defra's consultation on the CAP, which gave just four weeks to respond. The group convened a meeting, agreed its key messages and submitted a response, which was supported by 19 members. Link's three key recommendations were that Defra should: modulate 15% from Pillar I into Pillar II; prioritise agri-environment schemes in the next Rural Development Programme for England; and take an ambitious approach to Pillar I greening requirements, via a National Certification Scheme.

Link also worked with members to ensure that our collective views were represented in the media, including coordinating a letter from 19 Link chief executives, which called for the Government to transfer the maximum 15% of funds from farm subsidies to environmental schemes which support more sustainable farming.

In December, the Government announced that it would be transferring only 12% of funds from Pillar I to Pillar II. Despite being advised that our collective efforts helped avoid an even worse result, Link members were extremely disappointed. Nevertheless, we will continue to promote the New Environment Land Management Scheme to ensure it delivers for wildlife and landscapes.

Throughout 2013, a group of Link members worked to collectively address the **bovine tuberculosis** issue. In July, Link met with Defra's TB science advisory team, including the Chief Veterinary Officer, to discuss Defra's bovine TB policy in general and its badger culling policy in particular.

In the same month, Link published a position statement on badgers and bovine tuberculosis in England, concluding that killing badgers is a costly distraction from the development of a more rigorous, effective and publicly acceptable approach to the control of bovine TB. In addition, Link recommended that Defra be guided by the best available scientific evidence and advice, and reconsider its policy of badger culling. Instead it should invest resources in developing a package of measures that includes tackling cattle transmission, improving cattle testing, implementing biosecurity measures, vaccinating badgers, and developing vaccines for use in cattle.

In September, Link was represented at the Defra stakeholder workshop on future bovine TB policy for England. Link also provided a comprehensive submission to the consultation on a Draft Strategy for Achieving 'Officially Bovine Tuberculosis-Free' status for England which was supported by 10 member organisations. The following month, Link was represented at the "Vaccination in the control of bovine tuberculosis" conference at Zoological Society of London and, in November, Link held a productive meeting with senior NFU representatives to discuss a coordinated national vaccination strategy.

Link's **Habitats and Birds Task and Finish Group** was set up in December 2011 after the Chancellor complained in his autumn statement about the burden of 'endless social and environmental goals' on industry. The group continued to engage with Defra in 2013, to proper implementation of the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives.

In February, Link responded to Defra's consultation on draft overarching guidance for Developers, Regulators and Land/Marine Managers and the simplification of existing guidance of the Habitats Directives. In the core guidance response, Link expressed concern that, of the eighteen recommendations proposed in the draft guidance on the application of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, only four were reflected in the final guidance document. Link also urged the Government to ensure core guidance is compatible with EU guidance.

In 2014, Link's work on the Habitats and Birds Directives will be continued through Link's Legal Strategy Group.

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The **Water Working Group** continued to operate successfully as the Blueprint for Water coalition, along with partners the Angling Trust and Waterwise. In 2013 Defra rolled out the 'Catchment Based Approach' to water management, which represents the kind of landscape scale approach to freshwater management that the Blueprint have consistently called for. In advance of the roll out, the Blueprint published a 'Vision for the Catchment Approach', to influence Defra's development of the approach, as well as to provide a basis from which we can assess the success of the approach.

The Blueprint continued working intensively on the review of water pricing (PR14), building on its report, *Blueprint for PR14*, as a mechanism for driving water company resources into protection and enhancement of the water environment. The group met with Defra, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Ofwat in May to discuss progress on the price review and the contribution of stakeholders via water companies' new Customer Challenge Groups (including Blueprint members). We also provided a timely letter of support for Defra's approach to moving the 'Restoring Sustainable Abstraction' programme into water company expenditure under the price review. The group met Yorkshire Water, Southern Water and Thames Water to discuss the details of their Water Resource Management Plans and Business Plans, and contributed to those plans via the Customer Challenge Groups at Thames Water, Southern Water, Affinity Water, Anglian Water and United Utilities.

The Blueprint's work on the Water Bill also helped to support its work on PR14, by pushing for a primary sustainability duty for Ofwat, which would support the regulator to approve water company plans for schemes such as catchment management, which show good outcomes for people and the environment over a longer timeframe than the five-yearly price review process. The group met with Defra a number of times to discuss the Bill, including Defra's amendment to introduce a 'resilience duty'.

The group also used the Water Bill to try to enable a clear, early timetable for the much-needed reform of the water abstraction system, to ensure that this vital reform is not lost to other political priorities in the 2015 – 2020 Parliament. A reformed system would ensure that water use is sustainable in the future and tackles the legacy of over-abstraction. The EFRA Committee report on the draft Water Bill, to which the Blueprint submitted evidence, noted that 'the Government must demonstrate how [abstraction reform] will be achieved by the target date of 2022.' In addition to this work, the Blueprint continues to sit on the Abstraction Reform Advisory Group, and meet with Defra to discuss how to gather wider support for the more progressive reform options.

The Water Bill also has relevance to the Blueprint's work on water efficiency. Currently, companies can only introduce water metering when they are in an area of designated water stress. The Blueprint has urged parliamentarians to table an amendment to the Bill that would enable a water companies' customers to choose universal metering in their area, even if it is not an area of water stress.

The Water Framework Directive continues to provide the high level direction for water quality work in the UK, as in other European Member States. In the run-up to the development of the second round of River Basin Management Plans, the Blueprint responded to the Environment Agency 'Challenges and Choices consultation' on significant water management issues, as well as engaging with the Agency's approach to 'disproportionate costs' under the Directive.

The Blueprint also engaged with issues that have arisen over the year which threaten the coherence of the protection of our water environment. One such issue is the Government's decision to pilot a deregulated approach to desilting in rivers. The Blueprint believes that this is unlikely to improve land drainage or downstream flooding, and that it could have serious impacts on the wildlife in our watercourses, potentially including impacts on watercourses in protected areas. The group has met with the Environment Agency, and also the National Farmers Union, to discuss these concerns, and wrote to the Agency with a formal position statement. Unfortunately, the pilots have moved ahead regardless.

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Finally, the Blueprint has sought to engage others in its work on water quality. The Blueprint submitted written evidence to the Commons Science and Technology Select Committee's inquiry into priority (chemical) substances, to which the group was also subsequently asked to give oral evidence. The Blueprint recommended that a further 15 substances should be added to the European 'priority substances' list, including the pharmaceuticals, ethinyl oestradiol, oestradiol and diclofenac. In the Committee's subsequent report, it noted that that 'There is clearly cause for concern about the presence of the pharmaceutical substances ethinyl oestradiol, oestradiol and diclofenac in the aquatic environment.'

The Committee recommended that the Government should: 'contribute to the collection of further information regarding the environmental impact of these pharmaceuticals on the aquatic environment'; 'set out how it intends to provide the evidence necessary to clarify the environmental harm caused by these chemicals in the UK'; and 'reconsider adding these three pharmaceuticals to the priority substances list in two years, when the watch list is due to be updated.'

Link's **Land Use Planning Working Group** has continued to work to improve the planning system in England, so that it delivers better protection and enhancement of the natural environment as a key component of sustainable development. Whilst the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is bedding into place in Local Authorities, the group's attention has turned to the new suite of National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) that will support planning officers to interpret the NPPF. Throughout the year the group engaged with the Department of Communities and Local Government, and the Taylor Review group – who were tasked with reviewing the guidance suite. Link also submitted a response when the new NPPG was published for comment.

The group also worked on the final stages of the Localism Act early in 2013, circulating briefings for the Bill's stages in the Lords, and meeting with the lead DCLG Minister to highlight our views on telecommunications and the impact on National Parks, as well as Town and Village Greens, rights of way and the option to put planning authorities in 'special measures' in order to improve performance.

Towards the end of 2012, Link established the **Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) Task and Finish Group**, in response to the active interest of Link members. In 2013, Link continued to operate this group, by employing an intern, since the secretariat is already working at full capacity. This enabled the group to achieve a significant amount of work in 2013, whilst providing valuable experience and skill-development to our interns Jenny Legg and Rose Wakeham.

During 2013, the group focussed on influencing the GB INNS Strategy review. In January, Link produced recommendations for the review of the Strategy for a roundtable meeting with Richard Benyon MP, the Minister responsible. Subsequently, the group remained in close contact with Defra officials throughout the year, including holding specific meetings in April, July and December in order to press for a progressive review. In June, the Chair of the group chaired one of the discussions at the GB secretariat's annual forum, which was attended by Link members, practitioners and officials. In the latter half of the year, Link representatives attended Defra's stakeholder workshops on the review, in order that they may put forward ideas and concerns on the review plans.

The group also engaged in joint working on the review, developing a list of the species that members felt the review should seek to tackle. The list was a collaborative effort, drawing on the extensive knowledge base not just of Link members, but also colleagues working on INNS at the Wales Biodiversity Partnership and the Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative.

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Link also provided input to the draft EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species. The group developed a list of the possible EU species that the Regulation might include, and lobbied with partners Birdlife International and the European Environmental Bureau in support of legislation which effectively tackles the significant economic, social and environmental issues that INNS represent at a pan-European level. The group submitted a series of papers to Defra outlining the approach we wanted to see the UK taking on the Regulation, including what we believe implementation could and should look like in Great Britain. Link published a press statement on the Regulation when it was published, to publicly welcome it, and to raise awareness of INNS issues in the media.

Raising the subject of INNS up the political agenda is a key priority for the group. Following the roundtable meeting with Richard Benyon MP, in January 2013, Link organised a visit of the All Party Parliamentary (APPG) Group on Biodiversity to the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust London Wetlands Centre in October 2013 to discuss INNS. A briefing was created for attendees on the issues surrounding INNS, and the EU and GB strategies were discussed. The APPG has set up an Invasive Species sub-group with which Link are maintaining a close relationship.

In the latter half of the year, the group started drawing together figures on the true economic cost of INNS to our members, to highlight the true cost of invasives, in terms of what Link members are spending on management and eradication, and the wider unreported and indirect costs of invasives.

In 2013 Link engaged with the Government on its proposals for a new Public Forests Estate management organisation. In July, Link convened a meeting of members to discuss the issue, and in September submitted a set of key recommendations to Government. Link did not support the Government proposals, since they do not meet all of the recommendations and principles set out by the Independent Panel on Forestry. Link recommended that the overriding mission of the new body be to realise the estate's full potential value to people and nature. Link also suggested that the organisation must be directly accountable to the public for its management decisions and continue to be part funded by central Government. Finally, Link recommended that a legislative safeguarding duty exists, to ensure sustainable management of the estate and prevent commercialisation damaging the current and potential wildlife and public value.

2. Help protect and connect marine species and habitats through the promotion of an ecosystem based approach to marine conservation

In 2013, the **Marine Working Group** continued to positively influence the progress of England's Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) project. Link met with Natural England and Defra marine officers on a regular basis throughout the year to discuss progress on MCZ designations, ecological coherence and marine spatial planning. Link also met with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) implementation team at Defra to discuss the next phase of MSFD implementation.

Link responded to the Government's public consultation on MCZs in March, calling for the designation of a first tranche of MCZs in 2013 and a clear timetable for the designation of further sites. Link's response was supported by 11 member organisations and the Joint Links. Also in March, Link met with the fisheries Minister, Richard Benyon MP, to discuss the Government's plans for designating MCZs. And in June, Link presented over 350,000 pledges from members of the public to 10 Downing Street, calling for the swift designation of MCZs. The petition was delivered with a letter to the Prime Minister from the chief executives of members of Link's Marine Working Group. In November, the Government designated 27 MCZs and set out a timeline for further tranches in 2015 and 2016.

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In September, Link corresponded with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Stephen Hammond MP, regarding the damaging impact of polyisobutylene (PIB) pollution on seabirds, which was the chemical responsible for the deaths of over 4,000 seabirds on the south west coast earlier in the year. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) subsequently banned ships across the world from discharging all forms of high viscosity and highly reactive PIB into the sea during tank cleaning operations.

Link continued to engage with the Government on marine planning issues and met with Defra, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Natural England marine planning experts on a number of occasions to discuss environmental aspects of the regional plans. Link representatives also attended regular meetings of the MMO's Stakeholder Focus Group, which brings together MMO staff, Defra and marine-users, including NGOs and industry representatives. Link wrote to the MMO in February to raise concerns about the application of the ecosystem approach in marine planning, and raised similar concerns in a response to the public consultation on the Draft East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans. In October, Link submitted a response to the MMO Triennial Review which emphasised the importance of adequately funding the organisation and improving the MMO's ecological knowledge, expertise and experience.

In September, Link provided further oral evidence as part of the Science and Technology Committee Inquiry into Marine Science. Link also submitted written evidence to the Transport Committee inquiry into the Government's Maritime Strategy.

Throughout 2013 Link took the lead role in coordinating Joint Links marine work. Link also provided regular updates for the Joint Links on the latest UK marine policy developments. In September, Link organised a seminar for marine experts from all four Link organisations to discuss marine conservation issues such as the MSFD and the UK Marine Protected Area (MPA) network. The seminar resulted in the agreement of a Joint Links marine work programme for 2014, focusing on the development of an ecologically coherent network of MPAs.

One of the key objectives of Link's **Whales Working Group** is to ensure the UK Government maintains a strong anti-whaling and pro-conservation strategy for the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The group also addresses other issues relating to cetacean conservation and welfare, such as ocean noise and marine debris.

During 2013, Link arranged a number of meetings and teleconferences between Link members and senior Defra officers to influence and inform the UK Government's engagement in the IWC. Link used these meetings to emphasise the importance of retaining the moratorium on commercial whaling and the need for firm opposition to Iceland, Norway and Japan's whaling programmes. Link wrote to Defra in April to highlight priority work areas for Government regarding the protection of cetaceans and also briefed Defra ahead of the IWC Scientific Committee meeting in June.

In March, a Link delegation met with the Danish Ambassador, Anne Hedensted Steffensen, to express concern about Greenland's decision to unilaterally set catch limits for whales without the approval of the IWC. Denmark has subsequently raised the issue with the government of Greenland.

In May, Link corresponded with University of Aberdeen to highlight concerns about the collaboration between the University and the Marine Research Institute in Iceland, relating to the killing of whales in the name of science and the use of data obtained from this lethal research. Link met with representatives from the University in September to discuss these sensitive issues in more detail.

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Link ran a very productive UK Cetacean Workshop in November, which discussed the threats to cetaceans posed by sound disturbance, bycatch, climate change and pollution. Event speakers included Peter Evans from the Sea Watch Foundation and Sarah Gregerson from ClientEarth. The workshop also included a review of UK laws regarding cetaceans. Link will be writing to the Minister George Eustice in early 2014 to call for increased protection for UK cetaceans.

3. Raise the political profile of the ethical and economic value of biodiversity and the socio-economic and ecological impacts of its loss

Link's **Biodiversity Working Group** continued to engage with the Government over its biodiversity strategy, *Biodiversity 2020*. The strategy, published in August 2011, outlines the Government's ambition to halt the decline in biodiversity by 2020, in line with its European and international obligations. The effective functioning of this strategy is therefore vital to protecting and enhancing the species and habitats which form the basis of our natural environment.

During 2013, Link has continued to discuss *Biodiversity 2020* with Defra and Natural England and has been calling for a step change in support for this strategy so its objectives can be achieved. To date, *Biodiversity 2020* has been poorly communicated, underfunded and is behind schedule.

In February the group met to review its work in 2012 and to agree a work plan for the next two years. Priorities for 2013 included raising awareness with the Government on the lack of communications and funding for *Biodiversity 2020*. This resulted in developing a business plan for a new online portal, which could represent a 'one-stop-shop' for information on *Biodiversity 2020*. The portal was discussed with Natural England and Defra, who recognised the value of the proposal, although the Government's freeze on marketing and communications meant that no funding was available for the project.

The governance structures for delivering *Biodiversity 2020* have been in place in 2013 and, whilst they have the right composition, they require a fresh focus and renewed leadership. Although implementation is underway, progress in some areas has been slow. Throughout the year, Link has continued to engage with external groups as part of this governance structure including the Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG), the People Engagement Group (PEG) and the England Biodiversity Stakeholder Group. Link also attended the UK Biodiversity Indicators Steering Group in February and July.

Link attended TBG meetings in March, June, September and December, as well as holding teleconferences with members before and after these meetings. In September, Link met with Natural England and Defra to discuss the membership and functionality of TBG and how it could be improved in the future. Link again raised the issues around poor communication, the lack of join-up between various stakeholders and the low profile of the strategy in policy areas both within Defra and across Government.

Link attended meetings for PEG in January, April, July and November and also attended EBSG meetings in March, July and November, which included the Minister's annual visit. In August, Link wrote to the Minister, regarding the poor linkages between Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs).

In September, Link was invited to sit on the Sustainability Working Group which was established to review the Local Environment Partnerships' (LEPs) growth plans, which set out priorities for spending EU structural funds. Link developed, and submitted to Defra, criteria to review the 39 LEPs to ensure that the natural environment was included in the draft plans and links were made with LNPs. For LNPs to be effective, they must be championed by Ministers across the Government and be sufficiently resourced. The Sustainability Working Group was important, as it brought together BIS and Defra to review the LEP strategies.

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In 2013 Link took on a representative role on the Natural England's biodiversity monitoring strategy group and attended meetings in October and December. In *Nature Check*, we called for the Government to put monitoring and surveillance systems in place to identify where objectives are being met, and to ensure that all guidance from Defra relating to Natural England clearly articulates Natural England's role as an independent champion for nature, whose primary purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural environment. The biodiversity monitoring strategy group is looking at: the current approach to monitoring, advice on work that contributes to monitoring; and the issues and risks. They will also develop recommendations.

In the latter half of 2013, Link explored means by which biodiversity can be embedded into Link's other working groups. This began with a meeting of the chairs and vice chairs in September 2013, to agree on how this could be done most effectively. Support for priority species should be usefully aided by the identification of overlap between different delivery mechanisms, to demonstrate how species support can be integrated into habitat and landscape-scale conservation, locally-led initiatives and policy implementation plans, for example, the Water Framework Directive.

In November, Link's BWG met with the Heritage Lottery Fund, to discuss ways of improving funding of Biodiversity 2020 priorities. Link will be liaising with HLF to develop this work in 2014.

A host of issues came to the fore in 2013 regarding valuing nature, in financial terms, and attempting to find funding to support environmental work in the public sector. Link's members were keen to understand and respond in a considered fashion to these developments, and also to engage with specific initiatives such as the Natural Capital Committee. In April 2013, Link therefore established its **Natural Values Task and Finish Group** to bring together relevant expertise and interest amongst Link members.

Part of the remit of the group was to 'develop Link members' understanding of the discourse around natural values', and the group therefore organised a seminar on natural values issues in October 2013. The seminar was very well attended, with 23 attendees from 13 Link member organisations, as well as two speakers (including Natural England's Head of Economics) and a member of the New Economics Foundation. As well as presentations on how economics and the environment fit together, and what opportunities there are for pursuing our agenda through economic arguments, there were useful sessions on how Link members can understand, engage and seek to shift the debate towards greater environmental protection.

The group also proactively engaged with the Natural Capital Committee, developing a collective response to the Committee's first report and meeting with the secretariat to discuss the Committee's next steps and how Link can support its work.

One of the group's major areas of work in 2013 was biodiversity offsetting, which should ensure that that developers pay for the damage that they cause. The Government believes that offsetting could make a significant contribution to supporting nature as well as development. However, Link members have real concerns over whether the ability to 'offset' damage to another location would become a carte blanche to destroy nature where it would previously have been protected under the planning system. While recognising that offsetting could have real benefits, Link members are also concerned that the metrics used to assess the biodiversity value of sites need to be more sophisticated, and that the system needs to take account of the social value of green space.

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The Natural Values Task and Finish Group, together with the Land Use Planning Working Group, intensively engaged with the biodiversity offsetting issue during 2013. This included: meeting Defra officials and Ministers in February, June and October; attending the Secretary of State's summits on offsetting in May and August; holding a teleconference with the Secretary of State in July; and attending the meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity, which hosted a session on offsetting with the Secretary of State in November. Link's Director also held informal discussions with Defra officials to ensure that they, and Ministers, were regularly apprised of Link's members' opinions and specific concerns. In October, Link responded to the consultation on the Government's green paper, with sign on from 15 Link members. In developing its response, Link met with other organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and the Law Commission. We also kept in contact with European colleagues working on relevant European proposals on 'no net loss.'

The group also engaged with the new 'duty to consider economic growth', which the Government plan to impose on all non-economic regulators, including Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and the Marine Management Organisation. Link members are very concerned that it could conflict with the duties these organisations have to protect and enhance the environment. Link was one of only two environmental NGOs to respond to the initial consultation on the duty, issued by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) in March 2013. Link's response was critical of the proposal, taking issue not only with the principle of the duty, but with the evidence base that BIS put forward and the limited practical implications the Department foresaw.

Unfortunately, BIS did not reflect our submission in their response, but Link continued to pursue the issue, submitting evidence to the Joint Committee on the draft Deregulation Bill, the instrument through which the duty is being enacted. Again, environmental concerns did not appear to have been taken into account, although the Committee did note 'a risk that there may be, for some regulators, disproportionate and unintended consequences of the duty which need to be identified before the duty is introduced.'

Finally, the group took the opportunity to join the All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity's Natural Capital sub-group. Link members have been active in engaging with the group's work plan, pushing back successfully on proposals that the group work to 'allow business to offset their impact on natural capital through biodiversity offsetting', and 'work with Parliamentarians to explore opportunities for extending the biodiversity offset scheme', which would run contrary to Link's position on offsetting. Link also successfully proposed that the sub-group's work bringing Local Enterprise Partnerships and parliamentarians together should be extended to Local Natural Partnerships.

4. Promote the delivery of access to nature that is compatible with conservation of wildlife, re-connects society with the environment and enhances human health and welfare

As noted above, the Government's current proposals for biodiversity offsetting take no account of the social value of green space. Link members are committed to helping people to access and enjoy our environment. Proposals that would allow development on a valued local green space, on the basis that it was offset many miles away, have created real concern. This was a continuing strand in Link's advocacy around biodiversity offsetting throughout 2013, including in our response to the consultation on the offsetting green paper.

Access issues also arose in relation to the draft Deregulation Bill in 2013. Although Link strongly opposed the introduction of a 'duty to promote economic growth' in the Bill, we welcomed clauses that will implement some of the key recommendations of the Natural England Stakeholder Working Group on unrecorded public rights of way. These clauses will ensure that useful historical rights of way, which can enhance the rights of way network, are not lost in 2026 (the cut-off date for the recording of such ways on definitive maps).

In Nature Check 2013, we again raised the issue of the English Coastal Path. The report noted with the concern that Ministers appeared to be backing away from their commitment to implement the path.

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5. Raise the UK's commitment to wildlife protection, animal welfare and respect for animals

During 2013, the **Wildlife Trade Working Group** concentrated on communicating Link's views and recommendations to the Defra team dealing with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Minister Richard Benyon MP, the Secretary of State, Owen Paterson MP, and other external audiences. During 2013, Link arranged frequent working group meetings and maintained regular email contact. The meetings were generally held in advance of Defra Joint Liaison Group meetings, which Link attended on all three occasions this year.

Link was represented at both International Wildlife Trade Stakeholder meetings this year, in August and December. The focus of these meetings is to keep NGOs and other stakeholders informed in the run up to the International Illegal Wildlife Trade Summit in February 2014. In November, Link wrote to Norman Baker MP, Minister of State for Crime Prevention, to welcome the Government's intention to be a global leader in tackling the illegal wildlife trade, along with its commitments to host a Heads of State meeting on this issue in February 2014. The letter also highlighted the need to ensure continued long term funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

The group also aims to engage with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) over the enforcement of wildlife legislation in their constituency. At the end of March, Link wrote to all PCCs, urging them to work closely with their constabulary's Police Wildlife Crime Officer and ensure that wildlife crime is given sufficient prioritisation and police resources. Link received 12 positive replies from PCCs with an invitation for a Link representative to attend a roundtable in May with the PCC for Bedfordshire. In July, Link was represented at the association of Police and Crime Commissioners conference. The event focussed on partnership working and sharing best practice, as well as looking at the costs and impacts of rural crime. Link later received information that the PCC for Bedfordshire was interested in acting as a lead advocate for wildlife crime. This will be followed up in 2014.

The group targets the Crown Prosecuting Service (CPS) to ensure effective punishments are delivered when prosecuting wildlife crime cases. In June, Link wrote to the Attorney General, the Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP, calling for the CPS to strengthen its efforts to successfully prosecute wildlife criminals, as recommended in the Environmental Audit Committee's report on wildlife crime. Link also wrote to Joan Walley MP, Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, to follow up on the Government response to the Committee's report of its inquiry into wildlife crime. In August, Link responded to the Crown Prosecution Service consultation on the Interim Guidance on Victim's Rights to Review. The response called for the scope of the policy to be extended to include wildlife crime and enable those who are not victims but have a legitimate interest and involvement in a case, to represent the interests of biodiversity.

Much of the group's work relates to CITES. In March, CoP16 was hosted in Bangkok and was generally viewed to be the most successful CoP in CITES' history. As a result of this, in July Link wrote to Jeremy Eppel, Deputy Director at Defra and Head of the UK delegation at the Convention, thanking the UK delegation for their hard work at the CoP. Defra responded by thanking the NGO community for its constructive engagement at CoP16 and reinforcing the positive outcomes from the meeting.

In October, Link submitted a briefing to Joan Walley MP, Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, in advance of the Westminster Hall debate on 10 October on the Committee's 2012 report into Wildlife Crime. Link's briefing highlighted the need for: a commitment of long term funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit; a review of the CPS wildlife crime prosecutions; a comprehensive wildlife crime database to record cases and prosecutions taken under wildlife crime legislation; and a Defra Minister to Chair the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime. In October, Link also held a meeting specifically focussed on wildlife crime sentencing. The productive meeting addressed how Link and its members can best work towards ensuring that wildlife crimes are adequately prosecuted.

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In February, Link held a meeting to discuss how **animal welfare** work can be incorporated into Link's operational capacity. It was decided that a welfare group would take a watching brief to explore how welfare can be incorporated into other working group initiatives. Later in 2013 the group produced a scoping paper to address how Link can add value to members' existing work and to identify a number of work areas with a welfare element.

In February, Link also registered with the Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) and attended a number of their meetings. In May, Link attended an APGAW meeting focussing on large-scale livestock systems, where presentations were given by various stakeholders including a large scale dairy farmer and the chief policy advisor at Compassion in World Farming.

In July, Link was represented at the 3rd Economic and Social Research Council's Green Criminology seminar, which brought together experts working on a broad range of issues relating to wildlife crime. And In December, Link provided a briefing for David Amess MP, regarding Animal Welfare issues, for his contribution to a Christmas adjournment debate.

Link aims to continue to support existing working groups in, where appropriate, embedding welfare within their work areas, until such capacity issues allow for a formal working group to be established.

The **Legal Strategy Group** continues to bring together legal experts from across the NGO community to identify and take opportunities to provide support to members and working groups in the implementation, defence and development of environmental law. The group also addresses legal issues in its own right, including the reform of wildlife legislation and access to environmental justice.

The group dealt with a number of significant issues in 2013 and held a number of meetings or teleconferences, to discuss issues including the Government's EU Balance of Competences review and the Law Commission's consultation on conservation covenants, along with its review of wildlife law.

Link carried out a great deal of work on the wildlife review in 2012, resulting in a submission of evidence in November 2012, with sign on from 17 Link member organisations and the support of Wales Environment Link. This work continued in 2013, and included a meeting in April, with Keith Vincent and Stephanie Hack from the Law Commission.

The Law Commission has confirmed the value of Link's involvement, stating, "In the early stages of the project, Link facilitated meetings, allowing the Law Commission to conduct outreach to the wider community of wildlife and environmental stakeholders. During our consultation phase, Link organised meetings and submitted an invaluable submission that we have drawn on in formulating our policy for any future wildlife Bill."

The final report and proposed Law Commission draft Bill, including the full consultation analysis, is expected to be published in autumn 2014, and Link continues to engage with the Law Commission on this issue.

At the April meeting with the Law Commission, Link also received an update on the review of wildlife law and to discuss its consultation on conservation covenants. The following month, Link submitted evidence on conservation covenants. The Law Commission is now developing policy conclusions with a view to instructing Parliamentary Counsel to prepare a draft Bill, along with a final Report and an Impact Assessment. These are expected to be published in early summer 2014.

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In August, Link coordinated a Joint Link's response to Defra's call for evidence on the impact of EU policy and legislation on the environment, as part of the Government's review of the EU/UK Balance of Competences. The response, supported by 20 Link members, 10 members of Wales Environment Link and by Northern Ireland Environment Link, made the point that many of the UK's most important environmental policies come from membership of the EU, and associated EU power to act in these areas. Engagement and cooperation at EU level ensures that we can rise to current and future environmental and economic challenges. Link members also contributed case studies to the Institute for European Environmental Policy's report 'Does the EU benefit the UK environment?'. Defra's report is expected to be published in early 2014.

An issue of particular concern to the group has been the Government's plans to reform the process of Judicial Review (JR). Link submitted evidence to the Ministry of Justice's consultation on proposals for further reform of JR, in October 2013, with support from 14 Link members.

In its response, Link expressed concern that the Government's proposals represent a mistaken belief that JR is nothing more than an irritant to economic growth and recovery and asserts that they are a disproportionate response to perceived problems. Link also pointed out that the proposals will prevent compliance with EU and international environmental law and warned that it is only a matter of time before the UK will again find itself before the Aarhus Compliance Committee and the Court of Justice of the European Union.

The Government published its response in February 2014, essentially back-tracking on proposals concerning standing before the court (one of the issues Link strongly resisted) but announcing a Bill to enact a number of other proposals of concern. Link will continue to work to oppose provisions of most concern.

Also in October, Link responded to Defra's consultation on its Draft Aarhus National Implementation Report (NIR). The Aarhus Convention is a United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) treaty which provides access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice in environmental matters. Link's response, supported by 14 members, pointed out that the NIR fails to provide an accurate reflection of the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the UK, and urged the Government to amend the NIR accordingly.

Link's overarching concern is the unprecedented scale and pace of legislative and policy change in the UK and the fact that the NIR fails to reflect concerns raised by individuals and organisations struggling to keep abreast of the proposed changes. Link also pointed out that the NIR fails to refer to a number of both actual and proposed changes, many of which will undermine the UK's ability to comply with the Aarhus Convention. The Vice-Chair of the Legal Strategy Group will be attending the Meeting of the Parties in Brussels in 2014 to highlight ongoing issues of concern about the UK's compliance with the Convention.

In November, Link submitted a response to Defra's Review of Wildlife Guidance, with the support of 12 Link members. The response expresses concern over the tone, accuracy and legality of the drafted guidance, and noted that proposals as drafted may result in some useful guidance being removed. Link expressed other concerns regarding both the implications of the review, and the review process, and continues to engage with Defra officials on this issue.

6. Improve the advocacy of agreed collective messages from the environmental voluntary sector to those who can help us bring about the change we desire

Throughout 2013 Link continued to present agreed collective messages to those who have the capacity to bring about change - both in Government, and elsewhere. And Link continued to improve the effectiveness of this advocacy.

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As in previous years, the secretariat oversaw the production of a large number of collective statements and reports, including 29 consultation responses, 12 e-bulletins, six reports and position statements, nine parliamentary briefings and four press releases. Link also sent 29 letters to Ministers, MPs, civil servants, Commissioners, embassies and Ambassadors. The secretariat organised numerous meetings with Ministers across Defra and other government departments and agencies. For example, the Marine and Water Working Groups met with Richard Benyon MP, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and the Natural Values Task and Finish Group met with the Secretary of State, Owen Paterson MP.

Link's Director also worked to advocate key messages, and raise the profile of Link and its members, by attending external meetings and workshops with Ministers, Government departments and other stakeholders. These included: the announcement, by George Eustice MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, of the designation of 27 Marine Conservation Zones in English seas; and meetings with Professor Ian Boyd, Chief Scientific Adviser at Defra and Ian Cheshire, Chair of the Ecosystem Markets Task Force (EMTF). Link was also invited to join the Natural Environment Funders Group, involving a number of Link members, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Defra.

Throughout the year, a regular dialogue was maintained with the Environment Agency and Natural England. This included meeting Paul Leinster (Chief Executive) and Lord Chris Smith (Chairman) at the Environment Agency, and meetings with Dave Webster (Chief Executive) and Poul Christensen (Chairman) at Natural England, to discuss strategic issues, particularly the triennial review. Additional meetings were held during the year to exchange information and raise specific issues including Defra's strategic alignment project and funding of Biodiversity 2020. Meetings were also held with Peter Bridgewater, Chair of the Joint Nature Conservation Council.

Productive relationships with Defra Ministers and senior officials were also developed and maintained. For example, quarterly meetings were held with Robin Mortimer, Defra Director of Sustainable Land Management and Livestock Farming, in addition to convening additional meetings on specific issues, such as biodiversity offsetting and *Biodiversity 2020* delivery and communications. Meetings were also held with Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, George Eustice MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, and Lord de Mauley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, who gave the keynote speech at the launch of Link's Nature Check 2013 report.

Link has met with a host of officials from Defra, Natural England, the Environment Agency, Ofwat, the Marine Management Organisation and others. For example, members of the Legal Strategy group met with Keith Vincent (Lawyer, Public Law team) from the Law Commission, to discuss the review of wildlife law in advance of submitting Link's response to the consultation on the review, and members of the Whales Working Group met with the UK's Commissioner for International Whaling Commission, Nigel Gooding, on a number of occasions. The Blueprint also continued to engage with the Institute of Civil Engineers.

In addition to these specific, one-off meetings, Link continues to be represented on a wide variety of forums that take forward work as diverse as the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, regional marine planning and the development of biodiversity indicators for the UK. We also sit on a number of international groups; in 2013 Link members were included in the UK delegation to the International Whaling Commission scientific committee meeting. All five members of the Link team continue to be involved with the Policy Groups set up by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Biodiversity, covering issues including: agriculture; planning and local government; marine and urban biodiversity; and natural capital.

The secretariat also sought to maximise its work by assessing the impact of our consultation responses (for example, for the guidance on article 6(4) for the Habitats Directive) and preparing advocacy strategies for key events and publications, such as the launch of our work on CAP, food security and *Nature Check 2013*. After publishing *Sustainable and Secure*, Link advocated its position by using the report to contribute a submission to the EU Sustainable Food consultation and the EFRA Committee's inquiry into food security. We also promoted the report to MPs and key senior civil servants in Defra.

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The advocacy strategy for Nature Check 2013 included a detailed review of relevant external contexts, barriers and opportunities, target audiences, our detailed advocacy objectives and the delivery plan. This planning paid off with a range of high profile meetings before and after publication, and an excellent launch event.

In November, Link published its third *Nature Check* report, supported by 41 member organisations. The report, Link's third assessment of the Coalition Government's progress against its commitments to the natural environment in England, found that, although some policies are delivering positive results, the Government's delivery for the natural environment over the last year has remained static - there has been no step change in leadership or delivery.

The report's publication coincided with a Link-commissioned independent survey by ComRes of more than 2,000 adults, which has revealed the love people have for the British countryside. Notably, 83% of British adults believe the natural environment should be protected at all costs, while only a quarter think the Government is doing enough to protect our landscapes and wildlife.

Prior to the launch, Link staff held meetings with Lord de Mauley and Zac Goldsmith MP, who both gave speeches at the launch, as well as key civil servants, and cross party MPs and peers, in order to secure the widest possible exposure for the report.

On the day of the launch we achieved excellent press coverage, with coverage across BBC1 Breakfast, Radio 4, Radio 5 Live and BBC News, with a combined audience of over 10 million listeners. In the print press we generated more than 130 articles, with a readership of around 22.5 million. This coverage not only helped to communicate our key messages, but supported Link's dialogue with Defra, and initiated a number of conversations, such as one around funding and communications of Biodiversity 2020.

The launch itself was very well attended and featured speeches from the host, Zac Goldsmith MP, Lord de Mauley and Link's Director, Dr Elaine King. The 96 people who attended the launch, included over 20 MPs and peers, 11 civil servants from Defra, Environment Agency, Natural England, JNCC and the Metropolitan Police and 12 attendees from non-Link NGOs.

During 2012 Link engaged closely with the Triennial Review of Natural England and the Environment Agency. This work continued in 2013, and included submission of a Link response to Defra's formal consultation, supported by 23 member and partner organisations. Engagement on the issues continued throughout the first half of the year, including Link meeting the Secretary of State for the Environment, Owen Paterson MP, in May, to expand on its position.

Defra published its report on the Triennial Reviews of the Environment Agency and Natural England, in June, concluding that the two bodies should be retained as separate public bodies with separate purposes and functions. Link welcomed this result which, we have been advised, was in large part due to Link's lobbying for a separate body to champion the natural environment. However, we recognise that challenges remain to ensure that the agencies are truly independent and are sufficiently resourced to be able to deliver their functions effectively.

Also in 2013, Link took the lead in coordinating a Joint Links response to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Triennial Review consultation. The Joint Links' report, supported by all four Links and 28 Link member organisations from across the UK, concluded that JNCC should be retained and allowed to continue its crucial UK-wide coordinating and overarching scientific advisory role, as well as keeping its current structure, functions and responsibilities. Concerns were raised that JNCC is critically understaffed and under-resourced and, while JNCC has developed a number of effective partnerships with NGOs, it still needs to improve its joint working. Defra's response in June broadly supported this view.

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7. Add value to the work of members by facilitating consensus on policies and providing support in the production of joint positions on a wide range of issues

Link continued to work to facilitate consensus amongst members on a huge range of issues within its working groups, as well as developing new areas – such as our Natural Values work – where there is an appetite for joint working amongst members.

Link's Policy Directors group met in September 2013, to discuss strategic planning, Nature Check 2013 and advocacy planning in advance of the general election. Chairs and Vice Chairs of Link's working groups also met in May and September, to share information and discuss current policy issues and opportunities for cross-working. Specific issues addressed included Link's policy work on animal welfare, biodiversity and water, its strategic review and planning for Nature Check 2013 and Link's AGM.

Link has continued to operate a web-based timetable of consultations in order to selectively respond in a timely manner. Consultation responses are routinely followed up with meetings with the appropriate consulting department or agency and the Secretariat encourages joint work on UK-level policies of mutual interest between Sister Links' groups in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Nature Check 2013 received very wide support from members, including our two partner organisations. The wide sign on reflects the careful development of the report: timetables for drafting and sign on were agreed and circulated early in the year, and the secretariat managed an iterative process of consultation with both working groups and the wider membership.

Biodiversity offsetting, which has already been mentioned, is a difficult issue for the Link membership. Significant concerns about the dangers sit alongside an acknowledgement that the process might provide greater links between development and biodiversity, including providing much-needed funds for conservation work. In managing this issue, the Link secretariat has sought to be proactive, by gathering and sharing intelligence and organising meetings with Government officials throughout the process. At a critical point, Link developed a letter, signed by 24 Link chief executives, to the Secretary of State at Defra, reiterating that a successful biodiversity offsetting system must respect the mitigation hierarchy, apply the precautionary principle and take account of the current lack of expertise at a local authority level.

In addition, the secretariat encouraged members to develop a position statement in advance of the publication of the Government green paper. The preparation meant that Link was able to put in a robust response to the consultation on the green paper, despite the number of difficult unresolved issues in both the concept and the green paper itself.

A difficult issue that arose within the Blueprint for Water coalition during 2013 was the consultation on new good practice guidance on hydropower. Historically, Link has not focused on energy issues, and there is an inevitable tension between the desire for a low carbon energy future and ensuring that energy installations do not harm the natural environment. In relation to hydropower, there was a significant tension, particularly because of the difference in morphology and wildlife of different types of river. However, the issue was successfully resolved when Link organised a specific teleconference with the relevant people, where we were careful to identify exactly what different members did and did not agree, and look at solutions for those disagreements. We were thus able to identify a concern that the options the Environment Agency put forward were not nuanced enough to deal equally well with both high head and run of river hydropower installations, and to reflect that in our response, which received sign on from nine Link members, including fisheries, conservation and heritage organisations.

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The four Sister Links share the same mission and aims to great extent, and for this reason we regularly exchange information and views on a range of policy and operational work. The Links secretariats are in regular contact through teleconference and email. In 2013, specific teleconferences were convened on subjects including: triennial review of JNCC; Balance of Competences Review; CAP reform and the UK Marine Protected Area network. In addition, the Link Directors held two teleconferences and all four held a meeting in Birmingham in July. These discussions, along with communications throughout the year, explored issues including: membership; funding and fundraising; human resources; strategic reviews; triennial reviews and the single body in Wales; approaches to forward planning with the networks; and relationships with Governments across the devolved UK.

The Joint Links continued to collaborate on issues where a UK approach is relevant. Marine conservation is one area, with all four countries receiving charitable trust support (from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust) in 2013 for a cross-UK marine project. Link's Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator organised a conference for all the Joint Link marine officers in September to discuss UK-level issues such as the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Link also arranged a further seminar in November for Joint Link cetacean experts to analyse the threats facing whales and dolphins in UK seas. Both seminars resulted in the agreement of a number of actions for Joint Links marine advocacy work in 2014. In December Link delivered a presentation to Joint Link marine officers at an Esmée Fairbairn Foundation marine monitoring meeting.

Joint Links also worked together to influence MEPs in advance of critical votes in the European Parliament. This included: contributing to an open letter to all MEPs in Europe; a postcard sent to UK MEPs; a press release; an advertorial in The Times; and a briefing on modulation and co-financing.

In April, members of the Joint Links met to discuss parliamentary advocacy. This very useful two day skill-share event, included discussions of our varying approaches to advocacy, the tools that we use and the external contexts in the different devolved nations. Attendees also visited the Scottish parliament to see how it functions in practice and what that means for interest groups in Scotland. The group also met with members of the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe).

The Links regularly include reports on the sister Links' work in their regular information bulletins to members so that relevant intelligence, including parliamentary information, is shared among the networks. We are grateful to WWF for providing a grant to support Joint Links activities in 2012.

Link also sought collaborative partnerships and new members to help strengthen and broaden consensus among NGOs. In 2013 we formed and maintained collaborative partnerships with the Angling Trust, Waterwise and Compassion in World Farming. The Environmental Investigation Agency joined as full members in 2013 and Client Earth upgraded from Associate to Full members. The Wildlife Gardening Forum also joined as Associate members.

8. Provide a safe forum for members to exchange information, and develop and promote action that could effect positive change

Throughout 2013 Link maintained a watching brief on a broad range of environmental, access and recreation, and animal welfare issues that affect the delivery of Link's strategic objectives. We provided opportunities for members to explore new areas of policy, or areas of policy where consensus has not been forthcoming in the past.

To provide members with appropriate, accurate and timely information, all responses to Link letters were circulated to members within one week of receipt. The Secretariat ensured Link's protocols and procedures were followed, specifically around electronic communications and confidentiality, and we regularly reviewed and updated our mailing lists and databases of all Link contacts.

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We maintained three internal governance-related mailing lists and three mini campaign sites on Link's website. Our monthly e-bulletin was extended to both members and non-member subscribers, as part of our strategy to inform those in the wider sector.

9. Maintain a high standard of service whilst developing the Secretariat's capacity to meet the needs of the membership

The Link Secretariat successfully maintained a high level of service in 2013, despite a number of staffing changes and additions to agreed work plans (e.g. addressing proposals for a new Public Forests Estate management organisation, responding to Defra's bovine TB strategy consultation and exploring ways by which animal welfare can be embedded strategically in Link's work).

Annual staff appraisals and day-to-day feedback from the membership suggests that the Secretariat is highly valued and recognised as approachable, effective and highly professional.

We worked with our members and donors to ensure receipt of funds to projected levels and a high priority continued to be given to staff training, with the budget being retained at previous levels. A range of courses were attended throughout the year on subjects including: management and leadership, finance, parliamentary and advocacy. Some Link staff also took part in the NCVO's 'A Day in the Life' work shadowing scheme. The team held weekly meetings to discuss policy and operational matters, and maintained a regular schedule of one-to-one meetings between the Director and staff members, including appraisal procedures.

Link continues to offer volunteering opportunities to people with a keen interest in Link issues. We retain a pool of at least two volunteers at any one time and provide opportunities for volunteers to undertake specific projects aligned to their interests and expertise. In 2013, we benefitted from the help of Maria Crastus, Heidi Richardson, Jenny Legg and Rose Wakeham.

This year our volunteers worked on areas including: media monitoring; external communications; Link's annual member audit; and research related to Link's strategic review. Volunteers were given the opportunities to contribute to Link's monthly e-bulletins and to help with various Link meetings including the AGM. In addition, the Link Secretariat invited its regular volunteers to become involved in the activities of our working groups by supporting meetings, gathering information on current consultations and undertaking research for specific projects such as Nature Check 2013.

Link's Board of Trustees, and its Finance and Resources Sub Committee, met four times during 2013, including its annual away day meeting in July.

Link thanks the following for their financial support in 2013: Natural England; the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; Tubney Charitable Trust; the Gerald Micklem Charitable Trust; Greenpeace; and WWF, along with all our members and partner organisations. We also thank the John Ellerman Foundation which, in 2013, approved a three year grant to fund the work of Link's Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator, from 2014-2016.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

Link Personnel

For much of 2013, Link employed four full time staff and one part time staff. The team comprised: Elaine King (Director); Kate Hand, Julie Middleton and Kirsten Loveday (Policy and Campaigns Coordinators); John Sadler (Marine Policy and Campaigns Coordinator); and Louise Hartley (Information and Office Coordinator).

In April, we welcomed Kirsten Loveday back from maternity leave, as part time Policy and Campaigns Coordinator (PCC). In the interim, Kirsten's role was covered by Julie Middleton, who made a significant contribution to Link's work. Julie is still in the Link family, now working for The Wildlife Trusts. At the same time, we were pleased for Kate Hand, Link's other, to formally step up to a full time role.

In December, Louise Hartley, Link's Information and Office Coordinator (IOC), left Link to join one of our members, ZSL. Louise was hugely efficient in the IOC role, while also making a significant contribution to Link's policy work. Morwenna McKenzie has replaced Louise, and has quickly become a valuable member of the Link team.

Financial Review

The 2013 accounts show net incoming resources of £26,230 for the year compared to net outgoing resources of £48,803 in 2012. The unrestricted reserves at 31 December 2013 amount to £89,499 and are equivalent to approximately 7 months' total unrestricted expenditure.

Reserves Policy

Wildlife and Countryside Link shall maintain reserves equivalent to six months' operating costs. These funds shall be unrestricted and therefore available to fund all aspects of Link's operations in the event that they should be required. These reserves shall allow Link to plan against future uncertainties.

The target level for reserves shall be set at that required for six months operation of the organisation so that, should Link encounter financial difficulty, it may continue to provide its members with services at the same level for six months, thus giving members ample warning should the financial situation deteriorate further. It is felt that this is an appropriate amount of time for a small organisation such as Link, as it is likely that any additional or emergency funding would take some months to secure.

The reserve funds shall help to meet working capital requirements to cover Link's normal cash-flow operations throughout the year, and is reviewed on a regular basis. For the majority of 2013 Link's reserves were held in The Co-operative Bank. In September 2013, reserves were transferred to the Nationwide Bank. Reserves experienced no loss during the year.

Risk review

The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the Trustees, have been reviewed and systems established to mitigate those risks. In November 2013 the Management Committee updated the approved register of risks which will be reviewed regularly as part of the charity's risk management strategy.

Members of the Management Committee

Members of the Management Committee, who are Directors for the purpose of Company Law and Trustees for the purpose of Charity Law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report, are set out on Page 2.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Independent Examiner

A resolution to confirm the appointment Simon Erskine of MHA Macintyre Hudson as independent examiner to the organisation was passed at the Annual General Meeting in December 2012 and will again be proposed at the next Annual General Meeting.

By order of the Management Committee.

Amy Coyte, Chair
14 March 2014

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
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INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

Independent examiner's report to the Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link

I report on the financial statements of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2013 which are set out on pages 26 to 34.

This report is made solely to the Charity's Trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 and regulations made under section 154 of that Act. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the Charity's Trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Charity and the Charity's Trustees as a body, for my work or for this report.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and examiner

The Trustees, who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements. The Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act) and that an independent examination is needed. The Charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales..

Having satisfied myself that the Charity is not subject to audit under charity or company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the financial statements under section 145 of the Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements, and seeking explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
 - to prepare financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charitieshave not been met; or

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INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT (continued)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Signed:

Dated:

Simon Erskine FCA FCIE DChA

MHA MacIntyre Hudson
Chartered Accountants
New Bridge Street House
30-34 New Bridge Street
London EC4V 6BJ

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(incorporating income and expenditure account)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2013 £	Restricted funds 2013 £	Total funds 2013 £	Total funds 2012 £
Incoming resources					
Incoming resources from generated funds:					
Voluntary income	2	32,500	-	32,500	52,072
Investment income- bank interest		336	-	336	257
Incoming resources from charitable activities	3	124,889	95,562	220,451	137,883
Total incoming resources		157,725	95,562	253,287	190,212
Resources expended					
Charitable activities	5	155,238	69,146	224,384	233,604
Governance costs	6	2,673	-	2,673	5,411
Total resources expended		157,911	69,146	227,057	239,015
Movement in total funds for the year - Net income/(expenditure) for the year		(186)	26,416	26,230	(48,803)
<i>Total funds brought forward</i>		<i>91,010</i>	<i>27,858</i>	<i>118,868</i>	<i>167,671</i>
Total funds carried forward		90,824	54,274	145,098	118,868

The notes on pages 28 to 34 form part of these financial statements.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
(A company limited by guarantee)
REGISTERED NUMBER: 03889519

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2013

	Note	£	2013 £	£	2012 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	9		4,307		3,558
Current assets					
Debtors	10	12,808		10,533	
Cash at bank and in hand		135,221		107,886	
		<u>148,029</u>		<u>118,419</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	<u>(7,238)</u>		<u>(3,109)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>140,791</u>		<u>115,310</u>
Net assets			<u>145,098</u>		<u>118,868</u>
Charity Funds					
Restricted funds	12		54,274		27,858
Unrestricted funds	12		90,824		91,010
Total funds			<u>145,098</u>		<u>118,868</u>

The Trustees consider that the Charity is entitled to exemption from the requirement to have an audit under the provisions of section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 ("the Act") and members have not required the Charity to obtain an audit for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Act.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and for preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Charity as at 31 December 2013 and of its net incoming resources for the year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 of the Act and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the Charity.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008).

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 13 March 2014 and signed on their behalf, by:

.....
Amy Coyte, Chair

.....
David Lind, Treasurer

The notes on pages 28 to 34 form part of these financial statements.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.1 BASIS OF PREPARATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' published in March 2005, applicable accounting standards and the Companies Act 2006.

1.2 COMPANY STATUS

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

1.3 FUND ACCOUNTING

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 INCOMING RESOURCES

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of financial activities when the Charity has entitlement to the funds, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Subscription income from full and associate member organisations is invoiced on a calendar year basis and is recognised accordingly.

Grants are recognised as income in the Statement of financial activities in accordance with the terms attached by the grantor.

Income from recharged costs is accrued when the associated costs are incurred. Other donations and sundry income are recognised in the Statement of financial activities when received.

1.5 RESOURCES EXPENDED

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular activities they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of the resources.

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with administration of the Charity and compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

1.6 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS AND DEPRECIATION

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Fixtures and fittings	-	4 years
Office equipment	-	4 years

1.7 OPERATING LEASES

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the Statement of financial activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

2. VOLUNTARY INCOME

	Unrestricted funds 2013 £	Restricted funds 2013 £	Total funds 2013 £	<i>Total funds 2012 £</i>
Donations	7,500	-	7,500	24,072
Grants for core funding	25,000	-	25,000	28,000
	<u>32,500</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>32,500</u>	<u>52,072</u>

3. INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES - ANALYSIS BY ACTIVITY

	Unrestricted funds 2013 £	Restricted funds 2013 £	Total funds 2013 £	<i>Total funds 2012 £</i>
Facilitation, co-ordination and information provision	124,889	95,562	220,451	137,883
	<u>124,889</u>	<u>95,562</u>	<u>220,451</u>	<u>137,883</u>

4. INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES - ANALYSIS BY TYPE OF INCOME

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2013 £	<i>2012 £</i>
Subscriptions	120,719	-	120,719	89,612
Grants for project work	-	95,562	95,562	47,741
Rent and service charges receivable	3,970	-	3,970	530
Other income	200	-	200	-
Total	<u>124,889</u>	<u>95,562</u>	<u>220,451</u>	<u>137,883</u>

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013**

5. EXPENDITURE BY CHARITABLE ACTIVITY - SUMMARY BY EXPENDITURE TYPE

	Staff costs £	Other costs £	2013 £	2012 £
Charitable activities				
Facilitation, co-ordination and information provision	159,465	64,920	224,385	233,604
	<u>159,465</u>	<u>64,920</u>	<u>224,385</u>	<u>233,604</u>
Governance costs	-	2,673	2,673	5,411
	<u>-</u>	<u>2,673</u>	<u>2,673</u>	<u>5,411</u>
Total	<u>159,465</u>	<u>67,593</u>	<u>227,058</u>	<u>239,015</u>

6. GOVERNANCE COSTS

	Unrestricted funds 2013 £	Restricted funds 2013 £	Total funds 2013 £	Total funds 2012 £
Independent examination fees	2,640	-	2,640	2,400
Legal and professional fees	13	-	13	2,946
Other expenses	20	-	20	65
	<u>2,673</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,673</u>	<u>5,411</u>

7. NET INCOMING RESOURCES / (RESOURCES EXPENDED)

This is stated after charging:

	2013 £	2012 £
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets: - owned by the charity	2,020	1,328
Independent examination fees (including VAT)	2,640	2,400
Pension costs	7,859	8,253
	<u>7,859</u>	<u>8,253</u>

During the year, no Trustees received any remuneration (2012 - £NIL).

During the year, no Trustees received any benefits in kind (2012 - £NIL).

During the year, no Trustees received any reimbursement of expenses (2012 - £50 to 2 Trustees).

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

8. STAFF COSTS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2013 £	2012 £
Wages and salaries	139,025	141,599
Social security costs	12,580	15,030
Pension costs	7,859	8,253
	<u>159,464</u>	<u>164,882</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2013 No.	2012 No.
	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>

No employee received remuneration amounting to more than £39,000 in either year.

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Fixtures and fittings £	Office equipment £	Total £
COST			
At 1 January 2013	3,017	16,629	19,646
Additions	-	2,769	2,769
At 31 December 2013	<u>3,017</u>	<u>19,398</u>	<u>22,415</u>
DEPRECIATION			
At 1 January 2013	2,162	13,926	16,088
Charge for the year	427	1,593	2,020
At 31 December 2013	<u>2,589</u>	<u>15,519</u>	<u>18,108</u>
NET BOOK VALUE			
At 31 December 2013	<u>428</u>	<u>3,879</u>	<u>4,307</u>
At 31 December 2012	<u>855</u>	<u>2,703</u>	<u>3,558</u>

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK
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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

10. DEBTORS

	2013 £	2012 £
Prepayments	7,528	7,313
Accrued income	5,280	3,220
	12,808	10,533

**11. CREDITORS:
AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

	2013 £	2012 £
Accruals	7,238	3,109
	7,238	3,109

12. STATEMENT OF FUNDS

	Brought Forward £	Incoming resources £	Resources Expended £	Carried Forward £
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS				
General Fund	91,010	157,725	(157,911)	90,824
	91,010	157,725	(157,911)	90,824
RESTRICTED FUNDS				
1) Joint Links	-	5,000	(3,000)	2,000
2) Beyond the Pillars/ Crunch time for CAP	2,121	-	(828)	1,293
3) Marine Bill Campaign:				
ii. MPCC project Phase II	31,628	33,807	(56,909)	8,526
ii. MPCC Phase III	-	40,000	-	40,000
4) Blueprint for Water	786	-	(382)	404
5) Planning Coalition	289	-	-	289
6) Nature Check / Greenest Government Ever	(7,255)	14,155	(6,141)	759
7) Invasive Non-Native Species	289	2,600	(1,886)	1,003
	27,858	95,562	(69,146)	54,274
Total of funds	118,868	253,287	(227,057)	145,098

Purposes of Restricted Funds:

1. Joint Links
The WWF Joint Links project grant allows the four Link organisations in the UK (Wildlife and Countryside

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

12. STATEMENT OF FUNDS (continued)

Link, Wales Environment Link, Scottish Environment LINK and Northern Ireland Environment Link) to update each other, and collaborate on, work programmes, key priorities, and operational matters, through meetings and conference calls. In 2013, a further £5,000 was donated by WWF-UK. The funds were spent on travel and subsistence and meeting room hire for a Joint Links directors meeting. A sum of £2,000 will be carried over into 2014 to contribute towards the 2014 Joint Links conference hosted by Scottish Environment Link. The remaining funds were distributed amongst the Joint Links for use in individual Joint Link's core work.

2. FRD Beyond the Pillars / Crunch time for CAP

This project was set up in 2008 to fund the publication and launch of the Farming and Rural Development Working Group's policy perspective on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy entitled 'Beyond the Pillars' and in 2011 the project funded the publication of a report entitled 'Crunch Time for CAP'. A total of £2,121 was carried over from 2012. During 2013, a total of £828 was spent on design of; briefing papers for MEPs; a CAP briefing for MPs; an advert design for The Times; and the Sustainable and Secure report.

3. Marine Bill Campaign

This relates to funding from the Tubney Charitable Trust and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation towards the costs of a full time Marine Policy and Campaigns Co-ordinator at Wildlife and Countryside Link. This project fund provides for the salary and all associated expenses of the MPCC post. The full cost recovery principle has been applied to this project and transfers from this fund are made to Link's core fund to cover all associated support costs.

4. Blueprint for Water

The Blueprint for Water project was set up in 2009 to fund the publication and distribution of the Blueprint coalition's third report. £786 was carried forward into 2013 from 2012. There were no Blueprint publications during 2013 and no funding was sought from Link members. £404 will be carried forward into 2014.

5. Planning Coalition

The Planning Coalition fund was set up in 2010 to cover costs associated with the publication and distribution of the new Greenest Planning Ever Coalition's Vision for the Future of Planning document. £289 was carried forward into 2013. No funds were spent during 2013 and £289 will be brought forward into 2014.

6. Nature Check / Greenest Government Ever

The Nature Check / Greenest Government Ever fund was set up in 2011 to cover the costs associated with assessment, reporting and launch of project findings on the Coalition Government's performance on the natural environment, as part of its commitment to be the "greenest Government ever". A deficit of £7,255 was carried over into 2013 although this was covered by member donations early in the year. A total of £14,155 was received during 2013 from member donations and £6,141 was spent on production and launch of Nature Check 2014. £759 will be carried over into 2014.

7. Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

The INNS project was set up in 2012 to fund a volunteer to lead on Link's Invasive Non-Native Species Task and Finish Group. £289 was carried over from 2012. During the year an additional £2,600 was received from members and £1,886 was spent on travel and subsistence. £1,003 will be carried over into 2014.

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

SUMMARY OF FUNDS

	Brought Forward £	Incoming resources £	Resources Expended £	Carried Forward £
General funds	91,010	157,725	(157,911)	90,824
Restricted funds	27,858	95,562	(69,146)	54,274
	<u>118,868</u>	<u>253,287</u>	<u>(227,057)</u>	<u>145,098</u>

13. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2013 £	2012 £
Tangible fixed assets	4,306	-	4,306	3,558
Net current assets	85,193	55,599	140,792	115,310
	<u>89,499</u>	<u>55,599</u>	<u>145,098</u>	<u>118,868</u>

14. OPERATING LEASE COMMITMENTS

At 31 December 2013 the Charity had annual commitments under the non-cancellable operating lease on its premises as follows:

	2013 £	2012 £
EXPIRY DATE:		
Within 1 year	-	5,371
Between 2 and 5 years	<u>21,483</u>	<u>-</u>