

E-bulletin March 2013

Welcome to Link's March 2013 e-bulletin. See below for this month's top stories and updates from each of our working groups. If you would like to subscribe to our e-bulletin or submit news items, please contact [Louise](#).



A collective voice for CAP reform

In March 2013, three NGOs in Europe (European Environmental Bureau, WWF-EU and Birdlife Europe) initiated a set of actions designed to influence MEPs to vote for a more nature friendly CAP at the plenary vote in the European Parliament on 12-13 March.

Link acted as the UK coordinator for this activity, bringing Link members and other UK NGOs together around common messages to all EU MEPs.

Outputs from this work:

- An open letter to all MEPs in Europe setting out what the NGO community would like to see the CAP deliver. This was signed by 257 NGOs across Europe - including 27 from the UK - 17 of which are Link members.
- A postcard to UK MEPs summarising the key voting decisions in the plenary that would result in a more nature friendly CAP. This carried the support of 16 UK NGOs, all of whom were Link members. A similar postcard was developed by NGOs in other member states, however the postcard from the UK carried the most signatures.
- An e-action campaign ([Farming for Nature](#)) urging the public to send an email to their local MEPs. This set out how to vote in the plenary to deliver a more nature friendly CAP. The campaign was coordinated by the Joint Links (in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and gained support from 11 UK NGOs. In total, 40 EU NGOs participated and the campaign resulted in over 1 million emails being sent to MEPs from across Europe. In the UK, our collective efforts resulted in over 18,000 people contacting their MEPs.
- A press release from the Joint Links about the campaign was produced in the days ahead of the plenary vote on the CAP. This carried the logos of the 11 Link members who supported the Farming for Nature campaign.
- An advertorial published in the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security supplement of The Times on 25 March. Supported by 14 Link members, the advertorial called on the Environment Secretary, Owen Paterson MP, and his counterparts from across the UK, to lead the way in creating a CAP that secures real improvements in Environmental Quality.

Marine Conservation Zones

Link has submitted its response to Defra's consultation on proposals for designating Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in 2013. Link called for the swift designation of all 31 MCZs highlighted in the consultation as being suitable for designation in 2013. However, we expressed disappointment that so many of the other recommended MCZs face an uncertain future.

Link asked for further clarity on Defra's plans to create an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in UK waters. Link also pointed out that lack of full scientific certainty over

the presence, extent and condition of features, and the benefits of the network, should not be a reason for delaying the designation of MCZ sites and features. Link also expressed concern that the social, economic and environmental benefits of individual MCZs, and the network as a whole, are not currently adequately reflected in the Impact Assessments.

Triennial Review of the Environment Agency and Natural England

Since [submitting its response](#) in February, Link has continued to engage with Defra and others involved with the [triennial review of the agencies](#). On 14 March, Link's Director met with Andrea Young, Defra's Director of the triennial review, to discuss members' views and the options that Defra are currently considering.

On 15 March, The Times published a letter - '[Merger threat to countryside agencies](#)' - from 23 Link members, emphasising the need for well-resourced, independent science-led government agencies that can focus their specific areas of expertise on the distinct challenges that they face; increased flooding and declines in our wildlife and habitats. The letter coincided with an article - '[Agencies merger would mean wildlife "disaster", conservationists warn](#)' - which expanded on the issues raised in the letter.

On 19 March, along with thirteen other stakeholders, including Link members Campaign to Protect Rural England, The Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB, Link's Director attended a breakfast meeting hosted by the Minister, Richard Benyon MP. Lord Chris Smith, Chair of the Environment Agency, and Poul Christensen, Chair of Natural England, also attended the meeting, at which Defra outlined key points emerging from the review and invited our opinions on the choices and solutions as the review progresses.

Link understands that Ministers are currently reflecting on a number of options and will be meeting at the end of April or early May.

Triennial review of JNCC

Defra launched the [triennial review of JNCC](#) on 21 March. Link is coordinating a response to the review, in collaboration with our sister Links in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and convened a teleconference on 25 March to discuss the subject. The deadline for responses is 11 April and outcomes of the review are expected to be published in the summer. Please contact [John](#) for further information or to contribute to Link's response to the review.

Meeting with the Danish Embassy

A delegation of Link members met with the Danish Ambassador on 20 March to discuss Greenland's decision to issue itself with unilateral catch limits for large whales. Link expressed concern that Greenland, an individual territory with representation at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) through Denmark, is bypassing the IWC entirely by setting its own catch limits. Link urged Denmark to support the transparency principles of the Aarhus Convention and pay regard to the expectations of behaviour of states involved in modern international agreements. Link also pointed out that Denmark, as the contracting party to the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, has its own obligation to ensure that Greenland complies with the IWC process and that no

whaling is permitted until such time that a catch limit is adopted by the IWC. Link will be writing to the Danish Ambassador to follow up the points made at the meeting.

Link Secretariat update

In April, we welcome back Kirsten Loveday, as part time Policy and Campaigns Coordinator (PCC), a year after commencing maternity leave following the birth of her daughter, Ivy. We are also delighted that Kate Hand has accepted the role of full time PCC and that Julie Middleton has agreed to continue in her part time PCC role.

Joint Links update

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



Terrestrial Biodiversity Group

On 5-6 March Nicola Hutchinson, Chair of the Biodiversity Working Group, attended a Terrestrial Biodiversity Group (TBG) meeting on behalf of Link. Discussion included the subject of communications, where Nicola raised Link's concept of an online portal for *Biodiversity 2020*, which TBG members supported in principle. We believe that a portal would help to address the crucial problem of a lack of communications and profile around *Biodiversity 2020*. Members of TBG – including the wider Link membership – are being asked to give data on their contribution to outcomes 1a (condition of habitats) and 1b (creation of habitats). In addition, discussion focussed on species implementation, and a separate meeting will be scheduled to pursue this issue, possibly in the form of a standing Species Technical Advice Group.

Meeting with Defra

Members of the Biodiversity Working Group met with Geoff Richards (Defra lead on resourcing for Biodiversity 2020), Clare Winton and Rocky Harris (Defra statisticians) to discuss the resourcing of *Biodiversity 2020*. Defra is keen to understand the NGO financial contribution to the strategy, so some statistics will be developed through Link. The wider resources for delivering the strategy were also discussed, including links with the Natural Capital Committee and with the business community.

LNP and NIA keep in touch meeting

On 13 March Link attended a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and Nature Improvement Area (NIA) 'keep in touch' meeting organised by Defra. The meeting provided a useful opportunity to discuss progress made and raise questions about how information is shared between central government and LNPs. There was a discussion around self-designated NIAs; Defra confirmed that they are being encouraged to use the criteria that Defra and Natural England have set out, as well as the online monitoring and reporting tool. It was reported that LNPs also raised questions about their profile and resourcing with the Minister for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs, Richard Benyon MP, at a meeting earlier in March.

Nature Improvement Area (NIA) Annual Forum

On 26 March Link attended Natural England's NIA Annual Forum. The Forum heard from representatives from each NIA, as well as the NIA judging panel and contributors to the *Making Space for Nature* report. Speakers included: Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs; Poul Christensen, Chairman, Natural England; and Professor Sir John Lawton.

Priority Action Framework

Link will be engaging with Natural England over the Priority Action Framework (PAF) that governs the spending of European money that the UK receives, and looks at how that European funding helps meet biodiversity objectives.



Invasive Non-Native Species

Task and Finish Group intern

We are pleased to confirm that we have secured sufficient funding for an INNS intern for six months and are [currently advertising](#) for the first three months of the internship. Link would like to thank members for their support of this group. We look forward to progressing our work in this area, specifically around the GB Strategy review and the forthcoming EU Directive on Invasive Alien Species.

INNS Meeting with Defra

On 22 April the INNS Task and Finish Group will meet with Trevor Salmon, Head of the Domestic and Invasive Non-Native Species Conservation team at Defra, to discuss progress with the GB Strategy.



Land Use Planning

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive review

Link has submitted a [position paper](#) to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the EIA Directive review that is being conducted by the European Commission. Link welcomes the proposed changes to the EIA Directive, and puts forward a range of further measures to strengthen its implementation, including: a definition of biodiversity being included in the Directive and based on the Convention on Biological Diversity; public participation in screening and at the scoping stage; a revised definition of development consent; and the introduction of financial and professional penalties for experts whose work is found to be in error.

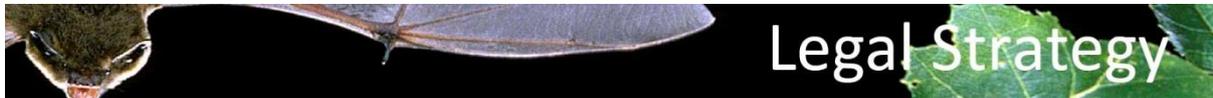
Planning Red Tape Challenge

On 6 March Paul Miner, Chair of the Land Use Planning Working Group, represented Link at the DCLG stakeholder meeting on the [Planning Administration Red Tape Challenge](#). The outcome of this Red Tape Challenge is expected to be published in July.

Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Broadband Consultation

Link has [submitted a response](#) to DCMS's consultation on proposed changes to siting requirements for broadband cabinets and overhead lines. These structures are intended to facilitate the deployment of superfast broadband networks. Link does not support further relaxation of the restriction on the deployment of overhead infrastructure in protected areas, nor the removal of the prior approval requirement for protected areas. Link does not believe that allowing a relaxed regime

to apply for only five years makes them more acceptable, as it could result in developers rushing to deliver the cheapest, fastest solutions rather than working with planning authorities in protected areas and others to deliver well designed solutions which are appropriate to designated landscapes.



Law Commission review

In November 2012 Link [responded to the Law Commission consultation on Wildlife Law](#), with sign on from 17 Link member organisations and the support of Wales Environment Link. This unified and constructive response provides answers to specific technical questions set out by the Law Commission. The Law Commission is expected to make recommendations to Defra around April 2013.



Meeting with the Minister

Link met with Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs, on 13 March, to discuss the MCZ consultation. Link stressed the importance of designating the first 31 MCZs and a timeline outlining the Government's plans for designating future tranches. The Minister asserted that insufficient evidence is available for designating many of the sites, but said that his Government's ambition for MCZs is "considerably more than 31". Link pointed out that several sites, in addition to the 31, could also be included in the first tranche at a very low cost. The examples given were sites at Flamborough Head (which is already a No Take Zone) and the Devon estuaries. Link also called for mobile species to be protected within the MCZ network. The Minister responded that he would be willing to look at spatial protection measures for mobile species so long as the measures were supported by rigorous scientific evidence.

Mobile Species Draft Project report

Following pressure from Link members, Defra has published a draft version of its [Mobile Species and MPAs report \(MB0114\)](#) on its website. The report's outcomes will inform the protection of mobile species within the proposed MCZ network. The results will also be important in relation to the UK's obligations under the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives, which require that highly mobile species are adequately protected by Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for other species.

Meeting with Defra to discuss Ecological Coherence

On 18 March Link met with John Clorley, Head of Marine Biodiversity (EU and International) at Defra, to discuss the Government's plans to develop an ecologically coherent network (ECN) of Marine Protected Areas in UK waters, and on a wider scale according to OSPAR agreements and guidance. Link expressed frustration that the Government wants to revise the criteria for defining an ECN, after Link members and other stakeholders had been working to the Ecological Network Guidance for three years. Defra asserted that it made sense for the Government to look at what it needed to achieve under OSPAR and other European agreements and its focus had therefore shifted to looking at a network based on the UK's biogeographic regions.

Marine Biodiversity APPG meeting

On 4 March Link attended a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Biodiversity on protecting the marine environment. Speakers included: Kristina Gjerde, Senior High Seas Advisor at the IUCN Global Marine and Polar Programme; Professor Callum Roberts, from the University of York.



Blueprint for Water coalition meeting

On 18 March the Blueprint for Water coalition met in Birmingham to discuss its work in 2013-14, the 2014 price review of water (PR14) and water companies Customer Challenge Groups (CCG). This was a well-attended and productive meeting and included a number of members who sit on CCGs. The coalition will be publishing notes on how Link members can engage with both Water Resource Management Plans, and the business plans which water companies will be publishing at the end of this year.

Good Practice Guidance for Hydropower Consultation

Link will be submitting a response to the Environment Agency's consultation on revisions to the river flow and water abstraction standards in the EA's Hydropower Good Practice Guidelines. The deadline for submissions is 2 April.

Meeting with the Institution of Civil Engineers

On 21 March Link met with Andrew Wescott, Policy Manager at the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), to discuss joint working, particularly in relation to ICE's [State of the Nation](#) report published in June 2012.

Abstraction Reform Advisory Group (ARAG)

On 27 March, Phil Burston (RSPB) and Lucy Lee (WWF) attended the latest ARAG meeting as Blueprint for Water representatives. The meeting considered emerging options for reform, and how different options might be managed and implemented.



Working Group Meeting

On 21 March Link's Whales Working Group held a meeting to discuss a range of issues including: the meeting with the Danish Ambassador; priorities for the year ahead; Defra's MCZ consultation; and noise limits for wind farm pile driving.



CITES CoP16

Several Link members attended the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) which took

place on 3-14 March in Bangkok. This CoP, considered by some to be the most successful in CITES' history, saw increased protection for many species. Marine species fared particularly well, with the oceanic whitetip shark, three species of hammerhead shark, porbeagle shark and manta rays being included in CITES Appendix II. In addition, parties voted to increase protection for the African manatee (included in Appendix I) and more than 40 species of freshwater turtles and tortoises. Measures that should improve protection for rhinos and elephants were also agreed upon. The next CoP will take place in South Africa in 2016. For more information on CoP16, see [IISD's Earth Negotiations Bulletin](#).

Government responds to wildlife crime report

On 18 March the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) published the [Government's response](#) to the Committee's report on wildlife crime. The response rejected key recommendations made by the EAC, most notably the Government has not committed to longer term funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit and does not agree to review the performance of the Crown Prosecuting Service in prosecuting wildlife crime.

Working Group meeting

The Wildlife Trade Working Group will be meeting on 22 April, primarily to: follow up on CITES CoP16; prepare for the next Joint NGO Liaison Group meeting; and discuss the Government's response to the EAC report.



Wildlife and Countryside Link
89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP
W: www.wcl.org.uk

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