Brexit: securing the best outcomes for the natural environment

Dr Elaine King
Director
What is Link?

*Link is an umbrella body*

Bringing together environmental voluntary organisations in the UK united by their common interest in the conservation and enjoyment of the natural and historic environment.
Science influencing policy

- European Commission’s ‘Fitness Check’ of the Habitats and Birds Directives
- Invasive Non-Native Species
- England Natural Environment Indicators
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and cetaceans
European Commission’s ‘fitness check’ of the Directives

• Good example of NGOs influencing decision-making by using science & evidence and mobilising civil society

• Key to impact was Link’s collaboration with members and sister Links in devolved countries
  – Position statement supported by 100 NGOs
  – 500 pieces of evidence submitted to the Commission
  – 520,000 people responded to public consultation
  – 100,000 were people from the UK
This week, 93 organisations signed up to a UK-wide Joint Links response to the European Commission.

Link is a single NGO consultee.

Cross departmental liaison - Defra and DECC.

Ministerial engagement - Lord De Mauley.

Productive relationships with the Commission.
sent a whopping 17,000 messages to your MEPs

and caused a stir on social media

Photo credit: www.rspb.org.uk
Habitats & Birds Directives

Karmenu Vella, European Commission (Nov 2015):
“The level of response to the public questionnaire is truly impressive…and will be assessed in the context of all the available evidence, including the very helpful and thoughtful contributions that your own organisations have made throughout the process”

Rory Stewart, UK Environment Minister (Dec 2015)
“the UK like many other Member States...does not wish to renegotiate the Directives”

February 2016: 80% of MEPs vote to oppose revision of the Directives
Invasive Non Native Species

• GB Invasive Non Native Species Strategy
  – Awareness raising campaigns
  – Pathway Action Plans

• Review of Schedule 9 of Wildlife and Countryside Act

• Risk of losing EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation
Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and Cetaceans

• **Research** by scientists including Paul Jepson (ZSL) found:
  • PCBs are a leading factor in the decline of cetacean populations in Europe
  • ‘Hotspots’ of PCB pollution exist in particular European areas

• **Policy** levers identified by Link:
  – Stockholm Convention - raise ambition & accountability of parties
  – Destruction or irreversible transformation
  – Assistance to developing countries
  – Funding for research and monitoring to identify PCB pollution sources
England Natural Environment Indicators

25 August 2016
## Indicator Assessment

**Assessment of change in abundance and diversity of species in the wider countryside**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Long term</th>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Latest year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wintering water birds</td>
<td>✔ 1975/6-2012/13</td>
<td>✗ 2007/08–2012/13</td>
<td>No change (2013/14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: England Natural Environment indicators (Defra, 26 August 2016)
Challenges

• Uncertainty
  – new administration
  – new departments
  – post Brexit framework

• Capacity & Capability

• Economic growth agenda

• Science funding and collaboration
The way forward

- Understand Government
- Offer Brexit-focussed solutions
- Harness civil society
- Communicate
- Collaborate
  - NGOs, scientists, industry, Government
  - UK and internationally