



**European Commission:
The Future EU2020 Strategy**

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CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE EU2020 STRATEGY RESPONSE OF THE JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Introduction

JNCC is the statutory adviser to the Government on UK and international nature conservation. Its work contributes to maintaining and enriching biological diversity, conserving geological features and sustaining natural systems.

JNCC welcomes the opportunity to comment on the 'EU 2020' strategy and the broad policy considerations it puts forward. Given JNCC's statutory role, our comments concentrate on environmental issues. In this context JNCC strongly supports the need for greater recognition of the importance of the environment in a '*sustainable, smarter, greener economy*'.

General comments

JNCC recognises and supports the need for a forward looking long-term approach in the EU that will address economic, social and environmental issues during the next 10 years and beyond, taking society in a holistic and cohesive way towards a more sustainable end-point. On that basis, JNCC considers it is important to extend the period for consultation and delay the decision on the final strategy until the June Council at the earliest.

While it is imperative for the EU to take action to address the current economic crisis, this cannot be implemented in isolation from the deeper measures needed to avert a much greater crisis already facing the world as a result of climate change.

"Ensuring that national recovery programmes are 'green' makes sense not only because climate change poses a far more serious threat to the global economy in the long term than do temporary economic downturns."

*Without the transition towards a low-carbon global energy system, the next economic crisis is pre-programmed. 'Green' recovery programmes are not only an option for sound and effective crisis relief; they are a precondition."*¹

¹ "Towards a Global Green Recovery - Recommendations for immediate G20 Action" (2009). A study initiated by the Federal Foreign Office and carried out by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (Prof. Ottmar Edenhofer) and the London School of Economics (Lord Nicholas Stern).

Increasing the resilience of economy, society and the environment is essential in the face of this major environmental threat. Promoting a low carbon economy alone is not sufficient. This must be accompanied by strong fiscal or other measures to minimise the depletion of natural resources and pressure on ecosystems.

The importance of biodiversity and ecosystems in mitigation and adaptation to climate change should not be underestimated and, indeed, are recognised in a recent Commission Communication². Equally, the same communication recognises the economic value of biodiversity and ecosystems. Their ongoing annual loss, estimated to be as much as 50 billion Euros, could compromise the sustainability of any economic recovery.

The terms ‘*sustainable*’ and ‘*greener*’ used in the strategy would benefit from clear definition or explanation of their intended meaning. Sustainable development has been defined as

*“the integration of social, economic and environmental factors into planning, implementation and decision-making so as to ensure that development serves present and future generations”*³

The term ‘*greener*’ seems to be used as a way to justify current or even greater levels of productivity. Producing ‘*greener*’ cars may contribute to lower CO² emissions but will not necessarily reduce pressure on resources. Similarly the strategy includes more productive use of non-renewable energy sources but there is very little emphasis on promoting use of renewable energy. Infrastructure is mentioned, but not truly green infrastructure, which is development that helps to maintain healthy ecosystems and ecosystem services so essential for sustainable development.

The United Nations Development Programme (2003) promotes the idea of a

*“systems approach to sustainability because economic, socio-political and ecosystems are seen as embedded within each other”. True “sustainable development involves growth that respects the limits of ecosystems”*³.

The EU2020 strategy, therefore, needs to recognise more fully the need to protect the environment and preserve important natural capital that underpins sustainable social and economic development.

If the economy of the EU is to become truly sustainable then either the importance of a renewed Sustainable Development Strategy must be given greater recognition in the EU2020 Strategy, or sustainable environmental and ecological principles, including the issues of climate change, need to be fully incorporated within the EU2020 Strategy.

If you have any questions about the response, please contact Jessa Battersby (tel: 01733 866808 or email jessa.battersby@jncc.gov.uk).

JNCC, January 2010

²European Commission COM (2010) 4/4 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions ‘Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010.

³ Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Republic of South Africa. 2008. People – Planet – Prosperity: a national framework for sustainable development in South Africa. Pretoria.