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## **JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

### **DEVELOPING A JNCC ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Paper by Tony Weighell and Lynsey Bigger**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Through formal and informal mechanisms JNCC is working towards minimising the impact of its day to day activities. Through an informal 'Greening Group', improvements have been made to office practices in several areas. A formal environmental audit, conducted by outside consultants, has also been completed. A strategy is now required that retains the informality and staff enthusiasm built up through the Greening Group, and at the same time develops a formal system to ensure that JNCC complies with government expectations and our legal obligations.
- 1.2 We now need to build on the audit report by analysing specific aspects of JNCC's environmental impacts (resource use, waste generated etc.), compare our performance with other organisations and appropriate benchmarks, and determine what actions we can reasonably take. It is planned to conduct this work during the Spring and early Summer of this year. JNCC's Management Team will consider strategic options in July and present recommendations to Committee in September of this year.

#### **2. Standard practice in environmental management**

- 2.1 There are well established procedures for the management of environmental impacts at an organisational level. These procedures seek to identify baseline information concerning an organisation's environmental impacts, how staff and management may work to reduce or eliminate these impacts and how progress can be reported both internally and to the outside world.
- 2.2 ISO 14001 is the international standard for environmental management and within Europe the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is also becoming important but is designed to build on systems developed to ISO14001 standards. ISO 14001 provides the basic framework for any Environmental Management System (EMS<sup>1</sup>) and is a good starting point for deciding on our own course of actions. Both schemes offer an opportunity for formal accreditation but JNCC does not intend to seek this for the foreseeable

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<sup>1</sup> An EMS is a systematic way to review and improve operations for better environmental performance.

future. These schemes do embody best practice and we should use them as models for our programme.

### **3. JNCC baseline environmental audit**

- 3.1 A baseline audit provides a ‘snap shot’ of the environmental impacts of an organisation, including identifying specific impacts and risks. Such an audit also examines existing relevant management systems and can identify performance indicators that might be used to track progress. Compliance with existing regulations is also reviewed.
- 3.2 The JNCC environmental audit recognised the high level of awareness among staff of the impacts of the organisation, and the importance of a range of informal initiatives to reduce these. The key areas suggested for improvement by the auditors were as follows:
- i. improved definition of responsibilities for key tasks relating to environmental management;*
  - ii. improved mechanisms for the identification, definition and delivery of training requirements for key individuals;*
  - iii. a degree of formalisation of current arrangements for dealing with suppliers and contractors.*
- 3.3 More specifically, although JNCC is not yet intending to seek formal certification for any management system it develops, the auditors assessed current conditions in JNCC against the standards used in International Standard ISO 14001.
- 3.4 In general the report's conclusions are in line with expectations, that we have a modest impact on the world around us. By using the report's findings, and doing some work of our own, JNCC can develop a more detailed policy (and objectives and targets) to deal with these impacts at a controlled pace.

### **4. Future work - short term**

- 4.1 The audit represents the starting point from which JNCC can develop an environmental programme and make the necessary management arrangements to ensure we comply with legal requirements and also meet government expectations for its agencies. Improving our environmental performance, and encouraging others to do the same, should also be seen as a way of meeting staff aspirations.
- 4.2 The key steps in developing a programme to maintain or reduce our impacts, are summarised below.
- a. Quantify our environmental impacts*  
The Environmental Audit does not quantify impacts (such as amount of electricity used, carbon emissions etc.) and we need to do this. Where possible we will collect information on the following:

- i. energy use
- ii. water use
- iii. material use (particularly paper)
- iv. waste generated
- v. business miles traveled (air, private car, corporate car, rail)

*b. Benchmarking*

We need to compare JNCC's environmental performance against government or other benchmarks. DEFRA have stated some targets for water, energy and paper use and other benchmarks are available. We will identify appropriate benchmarks and see how we compare.

*c. Analyse and prioritise the recommendations made by the auditors*

The environmental audit report identifies a range of possible actions that could be taken to improve our performance. Priority actions need to be identified bearing in mind legal requirements, government guidance, JNCC management expectations and staff opinion. The resource implications (in terms of staff time and financing) will also be considered.

*d. Draft action plan*

Based on a – c above we will prepare a draft plan of actions that JNCC might undertake to improve its environmental performance. This will include a hierarchy of actions with priority given to ensuring legal compliance. The plan will identify possible performance indicators to be adopted by JNCC. At this stage we expect that actions will be phased in according to established priorities, probably over a three-year period. This document will also identify areas of responsibility within the organisation for carrying out specific elements of the environmental programme. The draft plan will be put to Management Team in July;

*e. Prepare a formal Environmental Statement*

An Environmental Statement (as defined by EMAS) includes:

- i. a description of the organisation's activities;
- ii. an assessment of all significant environmental issues relevant to those activities;
- iii. a summary of material consumption, waste generated etc.;
- iv. an explanation of any policy, programmes and management systems designed to minimise the impacts.

- 4.3 The statement brings together factual information, and management decisions, resulting from stages a to d. The purpose of an Environmental Statement is to make explicit the organisation's environmental impacts and the proposed actions to be taken to eliminate or minimise these. The statement should be published and this can be done through the JNCC website with a brief review

in each Annual Report. The organisation's policy and its performance thereby become open to public scrutiny.

## **5. Environmental Management in Context**

- 5.1 Environmental management within JNCC should not be seen as a separate exercise, or simply as a management initiative, but should be an integral part of our day to day business operations affecting working practices, purchasing, risk assessments and staff training. JNCC has contacted local organisations (in respect of Peterborough) to ensure we benefit from existing local knowledge and programmes. We will also be using best practice as established in the country agency environmental programmes. The coming year will involve a certain amount of experimentation and investigation to establish what is practical and desirable for the organisation, management and staff.