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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

JNCC'S MARINE PRIORITIES 2003/04 TO 2005/06

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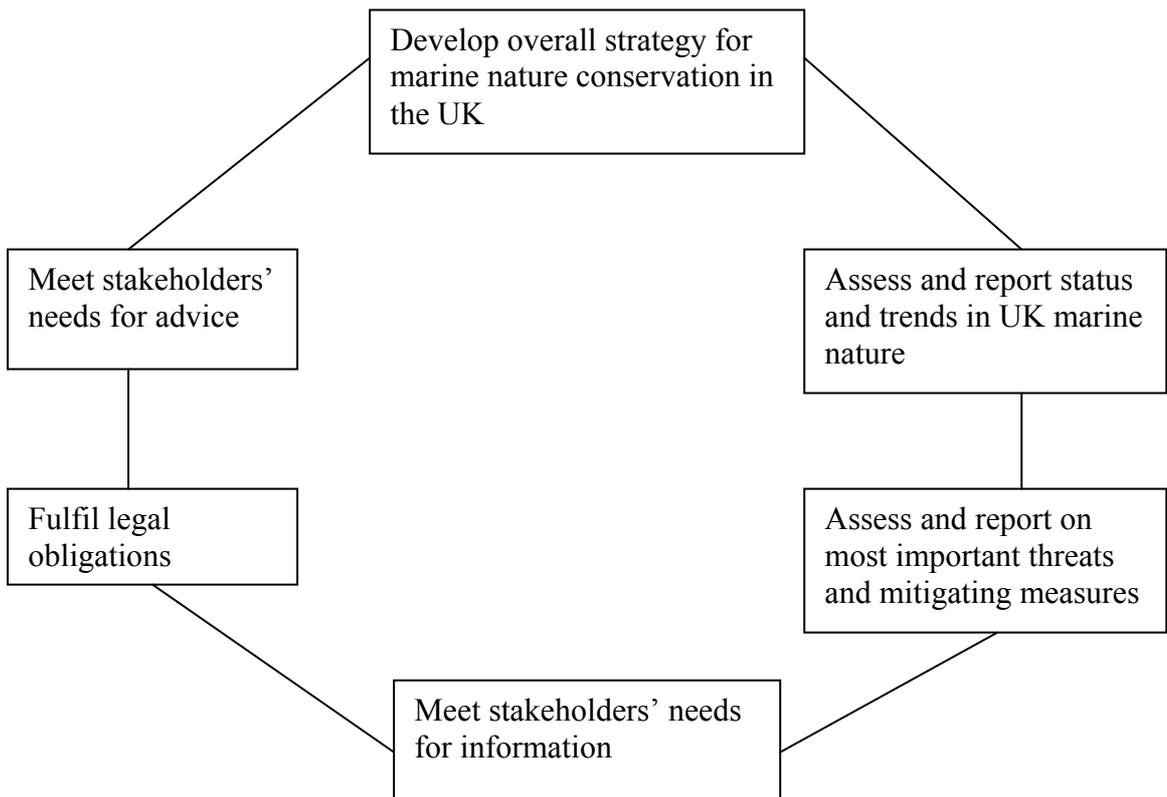
1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its March 2002 meeting, the Joint Committee discussed JNCC's priorities in the context of the 2002 Spending Review and asked that further consideration be given to JNCC's priorities for marine work.
- 1.2 At the same meeting, Committee agreed a process for completing the marine Natura 2000 site series, established a Project Group under the chairmanship of Professor Pentreath, and asked the Group to consider how best to progress the debate about setting marine sites in the context of the wider environment. The Group has given initial consideration to this wider contextual consideration and its work is continuing.
- 1.3 During 2002, the Government produced its Marine Stewardship Report *Safeguarding our Seas*, which was intended as the first phase of developing and implementing a strategy for the UK's marine environment. As part of that process, and under the aegis of Defra's Review of Marine Nature Conservation (RMNC), JNCC commenced the Defra-funded Irish Sea Pilot to test a proposed overall framework for marine nature conservation. The RMNC will report to Government *ca* April 2004. Also in 2002, the European Commission's Communication *towards a strategy to protect and conserve the marine environment* was published, which set out a number of objectives and actions.
- 1.4 It is apparent from the foregoing, that work to develop marine strategy at the JNCC, UK and European Union levels is proceeding apace but is unlikely to be fully shaped before 2004. It will also be apparent that work in the marine area is increasing and likely to grow further.
- 1.5 During 2002, the JNCC Support Unit has been adjusting to the need to adopt an integrated and flexible approach to marine nature conservation in order to meet the increased demands on it in a scenario of constrained resourcing. Over the last year, we have been reviewing marine priorities within JNCC in the light of anticipated future needs and demands. To assist this work, a conceptual framework was developed to identify anticipated priorities for JNCC's marine work covering the period 2003/04 to 2005/06. This is set out in paragraph 2.1 below.

1.6 At its December 2002 meeting, Committee adopted a revised *Statement of Strategic Direction* and agreed a process for developing JNCC's strategy further during 2003. JNCC marine work will be a component of this process of further strategy development and the provisional conclusions described in this paper will be a contribution to this process. It is to be expected that the conceptual framework reflected in paragraph 2.1 below will be modified in the process of the further development of JNCC's strategy, and that the priorities identified here will be redefined in the context of JNCC's overall priorities.

2. Overall context and shape of JNCC's Marine work over 2003/04 to 2005/06

2.1 It is suggested that the overall context and shape of JNCC's marine work over the medium-term can be considered in the form illustrated below. There is no particular significance in the positioning of the various 'boxes' in this diagram; their position in the diagram can be viewed as interchangeable.



- 2.2 Within the major elements of work which, potentially, are included within the above diagram, there is a need to establish clear priorities. In identifying priorities for JNCC, the following are considered crucial:
- i. activities which achieve significant benefits for marine nature conservation;
 - ii. legal obligations;
 - iii. 'timely' activities;
 - iv. activities which are 'uniquely' JNCC.

3. **Priorities during 2003/04 to 2005/06**

Having regard to the criteria listed under paragraph 2.2 above, JNCC's priorities identified for marine work over the medium-term are summarised below, organised within the framework illustrated in paragraph 2.1.

3.1 ***Develop overall strategy for marine nature conservation in the UK***

Priorities

JNCC will:

- i. continue to make a full contribution to Defra's Review of Marine Nature Conservation during 2003 and 2004. This will include completing the work to be carried out under the Irish Sea Pilot in the formulation of an overall framework for marine nature conservation in future years, and making recommendations as to how that framework could best be implemented. JNCC will contribute, as appropriate, to the roll-out and implementation of the framework (2005 and beyond);
- ii. finalise, during 2003/04 the marine component of JNCC's overall strategy, in the light of the Marine Stewardship Report and the EU Communication;
- iii. contribute to the further elaboration of the Ecosystem Approach and its application to the marine environment in practical terms (2003 and 2004).

3.2 ***Assess and report the status and trends of UK habitats and species***

Priorities

JNCC will:

- i. as part of the need to comply with its obligations under European Directives and international agreements, review existing monitoring and surveillance programmes against these commitments and agree

with Government an overall surveillance and reporting programme, and JNCC's role within that (2003 and 2004);

- ii. maintain current surveillance programmes on seabirds and cetaceans (including collaboration in the cetaceans (SCANS) survey proposed for 2004), where these support requirements identified under i. above. We will seek to develop with Government and others cost-effective programmes of surveillance of important habitats both inshore and offshore (2003 and 2004, with implementation thereafter);
- iii. continue to promote common standards monitoring for protected marine sites (mostly achieved by 2005/06);
- iv. develop indicators of the marine ecosystem - pelagic and surface, probably using top predators among other indicators (initial work in 2003/04 but work on this developing through the medium-term);
- v. energise and collaborate with others to achieve the above, contributing to surveillance programmes as appropriate (2004 onwards);
- vi. prepare an effective reporting mechanism for delivering information on status and trends; in the immediate future we will contribute to Defra's *State of the Seas Report* (text preparation work in 2003) and build on that.

3.3 *Assess and report on impacts and remedial measures*

This is an aspect of JNCC's marine work which is relatively unco-ordinated at the moment but is crucial to future conservation action in the UK.

Priorities

JNCC will:

- i. promote the effective recording of threats to the marine environment, (including through common standards monitoring) and seek to influence those who have a legal obligation to record activity to make their information available (2003 onwards);
- ii. encourage/participate in a review of existing remedial measures, assess their success and propose new measures as appropriate (2004 onwards);
- iii. disseminate information and conclusions in relation to i. to ii. above (mainly 2005 onwards).

3.4 ***Meet stakeholders' needs for information***

Priorities

JNCC will:

- i. evaluate current and foreseen marine information requirements of key nature conservation practitioners (notably within JNCC, country agencies, and other key stakeholders), sea users and regulators, and identify gaps in current delivery (2003/04) (Annex 1 lists JNCC's key stakeholders in this regard);
- ii. promote collaboration in the collection, collation and sharing of marine information to ensure needs are met and gaps filled where practicable (2003 onward);
- iii. identify priorities for new biodiversity research and seek to promote research in these areas with researchers and research-funders (2004 onward);
- iv. maintain JNCC databases and ensure all appropriate datasets are made accessible via the NBN (ongoing; aim to have all JNCC datasets accessible via the NBN by end of 2004);
- v. ensure JNCC and country agency staff, and other key stakeholders, have access to the marine information they need by negotiating access agreements, promoting common standards for data-sharing and ensuring JNCC information is effectively communicated (2003/04 onward);
- vi. support biodiversity conservation action by others through capacity building and fostering good practice in information management and dissemination, both nationally and internationally (2004 onward).

3.5 ***Fulfil legal obligations***

For the purposes of this paper, legal obligations cover all legal instruments (Acts, Regulations, Treaties, Agreements etc), where Government expects a service to be provided by JNCC.

Priorities

JNCC will:

- i. working with country agency colleagues, and other stakeholders as appropriate, identify the most appropriate network of sites to propose for marine habitat SACs in offshore waters, for other marine species SACs as appropriate, and for marine SPAs. Work on this using current biological information will be completed during 2003 and 2004. If Government and the European Commission require detailed biological

information on habitat SACs, additional surveys will be needed and the timescale is likely to be substantially longer, probably extending to 2005/06 or beyond;

- ii. carry out such other functions in relation to offshore marine Natura 2000 sites as may be determined by prospective Regulations for these sites (2004 onward);
- iii. contribute to the development of standards for transitional and coastal waters under the EC Water Framework Directive (mostly concluded by 2004);
- iv. provide advice and assist Government to implement UK commitments under the OSPAR Convention (following the adoption of Annex V on threatened habitats and species and the Biodiversity Strategy), including, in relation to the list of threatened habitats and species in the North-East Atlantic, marine protected areas and mapping programmes, and assist in the implementation of these as appropriate (2003-2006).
- v. respond within two weeks, or to other timescales agreed with the customer, to requests for advice on EIAs, EIA dispensation, oil spill contingency plans, deposit consents and other relevant offshore industry consultations. Standards should be commensurate with gain/risk to the marine environment (ongoing);
- vi. provide advice and help to Government to implement UK commitments under international instruments, including the Convention on Migratory Species (notably ASCOBANS and other Agreements affecting marine vertebrate species), CBD and specialist input to Ramsar and CITES (ongoing);
- vii. influence the development and implementation of further legal instruments that will deliver significant benefits for marine biodiversity (ongoing, but mainly 2004 onwards).

3.6 *Meet stakeholders' needs for advice*

Priorities

JNCC will:

- i. respond to Ministers' needs for advice and information on UK and international marine issues (ongoing);
- ii. develop, and promote actively, strategies aimed at ensuring that European Union fisheries are carried out on a sustainable basis. Most activity will be carried out under the auspices of the inter-agency Common Fisheries Policy project following the 2002 reforms, and will include advising Government on proposals for Fisheries Advisory Committees and on other aspects of implementation (ongoing);

- iii. develop, and promote actively, strategies aimed at the adoption of sustainable development approaches to marine energy supply (primarily oil and gas, and renewable energy sources), and shipping (ongoing);
- iv. develop partnerships with sea-users and regulators to support sustainable development for fisheries, marine energy and shipping, both nationally and internationally, and develop and implement influencing strategies in support of this (ongoing).

4. **Resource implications**

4.1 Work on the majority of the priorities described under section 3 above will be achieved through the effective deployment of resources within the projected corporate plan funding figures for 2003/04 to 2005/06, which the Joint Committee will be considering at its March 2003 meeting. There are, however, areas where there may be a shortfall of resources from these funding assumptions:

- i. there may be a need for additional surveillance work arising primarily as a result of Article 11 of the Habitats Directive (requirement to carry out surveillance on habitats and species of community interest). An appreciation of requirements here cannot be made until after what could be protracted discussions with, and within, Government. Any additional resourcing required as a consequence of the outcome of these discussions is likely to fall in the period 2005 and beyond;
- ii. there may be a need to undertake new survey work in support of proposals for (mainly offshore) marine habitat SACs to obtain biological data over and beyond what is currently available. If such survey is required, it would need to be programmed in from 2004 to 2006;
- iii. we cannot, at present, predict accurately the consequences of the outcome of future developments for JNCC in some areas, for example, on offshore SACs and SPAs once established, or in some areas of strategy development. While we will endeavour to meet such needs from within the 2003/04 to 2005/06 corporate plan resource provision, this is not assured.

4.2 In the eventuality of work being required to be undertaken by JNCC under 4.1 i. to iii. above requiring levels of resources beyond our corporate plan provision, JNCC would need to bid to Defra for additional resources.

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ANNEX 1

JNCC's KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Defra
DTI
English Nature
Scottish Natural Heritage
Countryside Council for Wales
Environment and Heritage Service
European Commission (DG Environment & DG Fisheries)
Oil and gas companies
ICES (key working groups)
OSPAR (key working groups)
RSPB
Parliament (Select Committees etc.)
Scottish Executive (SEERAD)
National Assembly for Wales
Relevant governmental agencies (e.g. CEFAS)
DTLR
FCO
Sea Mammal Research Unit
Marine Conservation Society
Secretariats of principal wildlife conventions
Environment Agency
SEPA
'Wind Farm' companies