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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

THIRD JNCC STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY

Paper by Tracey Quince and Marcus Yeo

1. Background and approach

- 1.1. Staff satisfaction surveys have previously been undertaken within the JNCC Support Unit in 1998 and 2000. Following discussion by the JNCC Management Team, it was decided that a similar survey should be undertaken in 2002.
- 1.2. The third staff questionnaire was developed in-house to gain an understanding of the attitudes and opinions of staff and how they had changed since the last survey in 2000. It was specifically designed to ascertain a) which factors were important in contributing to job satisfaction, and b) the current level of satisfaction among JNCC staff.
- 1.3. A project group was established to co-ordinate the survey. The group decided on the format of the questionnaire, the analysis of the results, and the presentation of results to staff.
- 1.4. For the first time, the 2002 survey was distributed and returned electronically. The subjects covered built on the questions asked in the first two surveys, and covered seven main issues:
 - i. social aspects (including working relationships);
 - ii. the nature, purpose and value of the work;
 - iii. pay and conditions;
 - iv. resources;
 - v. authority and control;
 - vi. good management;
 - vii. open and effective communication.
- 1.5. Five questions were amended or added to reflect interest in specific topics; these included the FMPR, environmental management and the Management Team. The total number of questions was 64. Staff were also given the opportunity to make additional comments as free text and to suggest additional questions for the next survey.
- 1.6. For each of the 64 aspects of work staff were asked to indicate how satisfied they were and how essential the aspect was to job satisfaction using a scale of

1 to 7, 1 being 'completely satisfied' or 'most essential' and 7 being 'completely dissatisfied' or 'irrelevant'.

- 1.7. Questionnaires were distributed to all 104 members of staff in November 2002, with 58 being returned. This represents a 56% return, which is a good response for this type of survey. We can therefore treat the findings with some confidence, even though the response rate was higher in 2000 at 62%.
- 1.8. The scores from returned questionnaires were analysed, aspect by aspect, for the 'whole population' (the average for all Support Unit staff members), and by demographic groups (giving selected results according to employment status, geographical location, grade, employer, gender and length of service).
- 1.9. All questionnaires were treated in strict confidence with only two members of staff having access to the forms for data analysis purposes and extraction of free text comments. The forms have since been destroyed.

2. Summary of the main findings

- 2.1. The main findings of the staff satisfaction survey are presented in paragraphs 2.2.-2.5. below. These are only the 'headlines' from the survey - more detailed results (including demographic analyses) are available from Tracey Quince.
- 2.2. The *top ten aspects of work contributing to greatest satisfaction* were (in rank order):
 - i. having flexible working patterns/arrangements;
 - ii. having control over when you have time off;
 - iii. having a supportive/friendly working relationship with colleagues in JNCC;
 - iv. being treated equally at work regardless of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, age or religion;
 - v. having a safe and comfortable physical environment to work in;
 - vi. having the circumstances of your personal life taken into account at work;
 - vii. having effective communication tools;
 - viii. being able to talk to a manager (not necessarily your line manager) if you have problems outside work;
 - ix. feeling a valued member of your working team;
 - x. having the opportunity to put forward your ideas.
- 2.3. The *top ten aspects of work contributing to greatest dissatisfaction* were (in rank order):
 - i. having equality in pay and conditions with colleagues;
 - ii. knowing that good performance will be appropriately rewarded;
 - iii. being appropriately financially rewarded;
 - iv. having 'red tape' kept to a minimum;
 - v. knowing the agencies have high regard for JNCC work;

- vi. having a clear JNCC strategy, linked to team and individuals' work plans;
- vii. being able to rely on others in agencies/government departments to meet deadlines that affect your work;
- viii. having access to training and development facilities to improve performance;
- ix. knowing management are equipped to manage change;
- x. having strong leadership from the Management Team.

2.4. The *top ten aspects of work considered to be most essential to job satisfaction* were:

- i. having interesting/satisfying work;
- ii. feeling a valued member of your working team;
- iii. having equality in pay and conditions with colleagues;
- iv. being clear about the aims and objectives of your job;
- v. being clear about the aims and objectives of your project/work area;
- vi. being properly trained to do your job effectively;
- vii. being treated equally at work regardless of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, age or religion;
- viii. receiving feedback about your work
- ix. getting help and guidance when you need it;
- x. having confidence in the skills, knowledge and aptitude of line managers.

2.5. The *main issues raised in written comments* were:

- i. irregularity of pay;
- ii. disparity between pay and conditions for staff assigned to different agencies;
- iii. staff working above their grade for no compensation;
- iv. the corporate charge card scheme should be widened;
- v. failure to recruit quickly to vacant posts;
- vi. training opportunities limited;
- vii. a clearer sense of priorities and values is required;
- viii. the profile of JNCC is not as high as it could be;
- ix. 'professional' managers should work alongside scientists;
- x. stronger, more decisive management is required to drive change within the organisation;
- xi. more respect for 'management' as a skill;
- xii. lack of women in senior positions;
- xiii. not enough value placed on the dedication of staff;
- x. lack of a link between SNH and JNCC intranets.

3. Comparisons with the 2000 staff satisfaction survey

- 3.1. There are some improvements overall, compared with the results of the survey undertaken in 2000. Areas which have shown the greatest improvement in staff satisfaction are as follows (not listed in any particular order):

- i. having interesting/satisfying work;
 - ii. having a secure job in the JNCC Support Unit;
 - iii. having a realistic workload;
 - iv. being provided with information about issues in your employing agency which may affect you;
 - v. being proud of JNCC staff and accomplishments;
 - vi. having sufficient administrative support;
 - vii. having supportive/friendly work relationships with colleagues in the JNCC Support Unit;
 - viii. knowing that the JNCC works in an environmentally friendly manner;
- 3.2. Areas where satisfaction has decreased since the last survey are as follows (not listed in any particular order):
- i. being confident that the FMPR process will provide a more secure future for JNCC and its staff;
 - ii. knowing management are equipped to manage change;
 - iii. having equality in pay and conditions with colleagues;
 - iv. having 'red tape' kept to a minimum;
 - v. feeling trusted and having full authority when work is delegated;
 - vi. being properly trained to do your job effectively;
 - vii. feeling that the information provided and the visual profile of the Management Team allows you to have confidence in their role;
 - viii. having access to training and development facilities to improve performance.
- 3.3. There are several recurring themes from the previous survey that have not been satisfactorily (although some have improved significantly) resolved and that continue to be of concern to staff and to have a negative impact on job satisfaction. These include:
- i. knowing that good performance will be appropriately rewarded;
 - ii. knowing that agencies have high regard for JNCC work;
 - iii. having strong leadership from the Management Team;
 - iv. being appropriately financially rewarded;
 - v. being able to rely on others in agencies and government departments to meet deadlines;
 - vi. having equality in pay and conditions with colleagues.

4. Conclusions and the way forward

- 4.1. The results of the staff satisfaction survey provide a valuable overview of how staff felt about working in the Support Unit in November 2002. It is especially useful to be able to compare results with the previous survey undertaken in 2000. Inevitably, the results present a mixed picture from a management perspective. Staff satisfaction has improved significantly in some areas, but remains low in others.
- 4.2. If staff satisfaction surveys of this type are to have any value, it is essential that management considers the issues carefully and initiates appropriate action. The

JNCC Management Team discussed the results of the survey in December 2002 and again in January 2003. They have endorsed an outline action plan that focuses on the top ten aspects of work contributing to greatest dissatisfaction (see Annex 1). Action is already underway to address some of the key issues.

- 4.3. Progress in implementing the action plan will be reviewed by Management Team on a regular basis, and a summary of progress will be presented to Joint Committee in September 2003.
- 4.4. Committee are asked to note the results of the survey and the proposed action.

Annex 1 to JNCC 03 N01

Summary action plan to address the top ten aspects of work contributing to greatest staff dissatisfaction

Issue	Comments	Priority actions
1. Having equality in pay and conditions with colleagues	Dissatisfaction with pay and conditions also came out strongly in the written comments	Development of a single set of terms and conditions for JNCC staff is already underway as part of the FMPR implementation
2. Knowing that good performance will be appropriately rewarded	At the time of the survey English Nature's pay deal had not been agreed - this no doubt contributed to staff dissatisfaction	Now that the English Nature pay deal has been agreed, any remaining major pay anomalies should be identified and reviewed
3. Being appropriately financially rewarded		Difficult to see what other action can be taken at this stage
4. Having 'red tape' kept to a minimum	Unclear what this refers to – teething problems associated with corporate charge card? corporate planning? staff appraisal forms? Note also written comment regarding lack of communication between finance and other teams	Clarification of what the problem areas are through further discussion with staff Improve communication between service teams and operational teams, e.g. through more joint working Will need to take care with introduction of new administrative systems (e.g. time recording)
5. Knowing the agencies have high regard for JNCC work	A longstanding issue Unclear at what level this is regarded as a problem – Committee level? direct agency customers? wider agency community?	Continue putting effort into communication and liaison with country agencies at all levels to raise JNCC's profile
6. Being able to rely on others in agencies/government departments to meet deadlines that affect your work		Place greater emphasis on managing stakeholder relationships and being explicit about our expectations and requirements Raise issue with agency chief executives and Joint Committee - how can they help to address this problem? If appropriate, undertake specific communication tasks at the appropriate time, e.g. PR activities linked to FMPR implementation
7. Having a clear JNCC strategy, linked to team and individuals' work plans	At the time of the survey the Statement of Strategic Direction had not been agreed by Committee	Statement of Strategic Direction was endorsed by Committee in December 2002, and a process for undertaking further strategic development is in place Need to ensure that there is a clear line of sight between individuals' work

Issue	Comments	Priority actions
		<p>plans, the organisation's corporate plan, and strategic priorities</p> <p>No additional action necessary, but must ensure that staff are adequately involved in developing strategic thinking at the appropriate times</p>
<p>8. Having access to training and development facilities to improve performance</p>	<p>May have been highlighted as a cause of dissatisfaction because the training budget was cut shortly before questionnaire was sent out</p> <p>Note also some written comments relating to training</p>	<p>Training budget should be raised to an appropriate level (increase has been budgeted for in draft corporate plan)</p> <p>Greater effort should be made to ensure that personal development plans are completed promptly at the start of each year, and to encourage managers to think carefully about training priorities</p> <p>In the longer term, a training and development strategy should be prepared to underpin JNCC's business strategy (also included in the draft corporate plan)</p>
<p>9. Knowing management are equipped to manage change</p>	<p>Also flagged as an issue in the written comments and in the results of recent exit interviews</p>	<p>In the short term, steps should be taken to communicate more effectively what Management Team does (e.g. by putting minutes on the intranet and summaries of key decisions in the weekly update)</p>
<p>10. Having strong leadership from the Management Team</p>	<p>Leadership was identified as an issue in the last staff satisfaction survey</p>	<p>Longer term issues include the role and composition of Management Team, and training requirements</p>