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**JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL WATERBIRD CONFERENCE BEING CO-HOSTED BY JNCC IN EDINBURGH, APRIL 2004**



**Paper by David Stroud**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 With the government of The Netherlands and Wetlands International, JNCC is co-hosting a major international conference on waterbirds from 3-8 April 2004. This paper summarises the state of preparations for the meeting.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Major international meetings related to waterbird conservation have been convened at roughly ten-year intervals since the first was held in 1963 at St. Andrews, Scotland. That meeting was the first major international gathering of waterbird biologists and established a process that led to the agreement of the Convention on Wetlands at Ramsar, Iran in 1971. The year 2004 is not only 40 years after the St. Andrews' conference, but is also the 25th anniversary of the Bonn Convention (CMS) and the fifth anniversary of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). It is appropriate that this Conference should return to Scotland at this point.
- 2.2 The venue is the Edinburgh Conference Centre of Heriot-Watt University. It is anticipated that about 500 key people will attend the conference. These will be mainly active scientists, with expertise in waterbird ecology and conservation. The conference will not be a formal, inter-governmental meeting but will aim for a full technical review of information.
- 2.3 The event will be a major milestone for waterbird ecology and conservation (as was the last conference which was held at the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 1992 hosted by the French government). The Conference offers an excellent opportunity to demonstrate UK conservation practice in action

- 2.4 A number of other international meetings have become associated with the conference given the significant numbers of key individuals present in Scotland next April:
- i. The UK will be hosting a meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee in North Bewick from 30 March – 1 April 2004;
  - ii. A meeting of the Scientific Council of the Bonn Convention will be held in Glasgow from 31 March – 2 April 2004;
  - iii. The Seabird Group will be holding its European Conference in Aberdeen from 2 – 4 April 2004, during which the results of the JNCC-funded Seabird 2000 project will be launched;
  - iv. A very significant number of international ‘side meetings’ will be held within the framework of the Waterbirds around the World conference, including a meeting of the European Union’s Ornis Scientific Working Group.

### **3. Programme and planning**

- 3.1 We anticipate a high level opening session with attendance by senior Ministers and diplomatic representatives of countries contributing financial support for the conference. Further details will be reported verbally.
- 3.2 The Conference will be co-chaired by Professor Colin Galbraith (SNH), alongside Chairs from the USA and the Netherlands.
- 3.3 A UK Organising Committee was established last year to support the work of the International Conference Committee. The UK Committee is attended by representatives of the country agencies, government departments and Scottish NGOs.
- 3.4 There has already been significant media coverage of plans for the conference, and we anticipate the conference will attract considerable interest. To this end, SNH are co-ordinating a Publicity Group to plan for a series of Press Releases in the run-up to the conference, and daily press briefings during the event.
- 3.5 The programme has recently been finalised by the Conference's Programme Committee meeting in Edinburgh. Major conference themes include:
- i. Reviews of migratory flyway systems around the world;
  - ii. Flyway management planning;
  - iii. Sustainable hunting;
  - iv. Protected site networks for waterbirds;
  - v. Monitoring of waterbird population and their habitats;
  - vi. The impacts of climate change on waterbirds and their habitats;
  - vii. Landscape planning, wider countryside conservation and protected site management;

- viii. Conflict resolution (especially fish-eating birds, geese, lead-shot and other issues);
  - ix. Waterbirds in the marine environment;
  - x. Communication, education and public awareness;
  - xi. Economic importance of non-consumptive uses of waterbirds;
  - xii. The arctic as a 'source' of waterbirds.
- 3.6 The Conference provides a potential show-case for UK policies and practices and it is hoped that there will be a wide range of appropriate presentations made by country agency staff.
- 3.7 The Joint Committee is asked to **note** the preparations for the Global Waterbird Conference.