



The ninety-ninth meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held at 0900 hours on 12 June 2014, at Monkstone House, Peterborough, PE1 1JY

This paper was provided to the Joint Committee for discussion. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for Committee's position on the paper.

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Chief Executive's report on topical issues

Paper by Marcus Yeo

1. 2014/15 business plan

- 1.1. Following discussion at the March Committee meeting final amendments were made to the 2014/15 business plan and signed off by the JNCC Chair. The business plan has been submitted to Defra and devolved ministers for approval.
- 1.2. Because of pressures on Defra's finances all Defra network bodies have been asked to ensure that they commit no more than 98.1% of their agreed budget for 2014/15. This applies only to reserved and marine grant-in-aid provided by Defra (not to UK co-ordination grant-in-aid provided by the four UK administrations). In effect this amounts to a likely £65k reduction in funding compared to the figures in the business plan. EMB will decide how to deal with this when considering the first quarter out-turn.

2. Pay settlement for 2014/15

- 2.1. The current pay deal for JNCC staff ends in July 2014, and a new one-year pay deal will be put in place from 1 August. Treasury guidance for civil service pay in 2014/15 has set a 1% maximum for average pay increases in government departments and arms-length bodies.
- 2.2. Following consideration by EMB and informal discussion with trade unions, the Remuneration Committee has signed off pay proposals for 2014/15, and these have been submitted to Defra for approval.

3. Structure review

- 3.1. The structure review mentioned in the Chief Executive's report to the March Committee meeting is progressing well. A consultant has been engaged to help develop options which will be discussed by EMB in mid June. Consultation with senior staff will then take place and a final decision on the preferred option will be made at the end of July.

4. Defra's One Business programme

- 4.1. The evidence and corporate services workstreams of the One Business programme continue to move forward, with input from JNCC staff as required. There have been no significant developments since the last update provided to Committee.
- 4.2. Defra is piloting a new process for the 2015/16 business planning round with Natural England and the Environment Agency. It is intended that this will provide greater clarity on priorities and desired outcomes across the Defra network. Implementation for JNCC will require adjustments to ensure full engagement of the devolved administrations.
- 4.3. Defra have recently announced that the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) and the inspectorate functions of The Food and

Environment Research Agency (Fera) will be merged in a new agency, and that Fera will be transformed into a “joint venture” with a private sector partner. A decision on the future of the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) will be made by October.

5. JNCC post based in Wales

- 5.1. Following discussion with the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales, JNCC have agreed to locate a post in Wales, probably based in the Welsh Government office in Cardiff. The responsibilities of the post will include acting as a link between JNCC and Welsh organisations and making connections with other parts of the UK. The focus is likely to be on developing the evidence base for biodiversity and natural resources (terrestrial and marine).
- 5.2. EMB is currently considering how best to fill the post.