



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 decision. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for Committee's position on the paper.

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Science leadership by Joint Committee

Paper by Paul Rose

1. Work undertaken to date

- 1.1 The report of JNCC's Triennial Review included a recommendation concerning science leadership. In June 2013, the Joint Committee agreed that it should strengthen its role in developing science thinking on key nature conservation issues across the UK. The Committee also concluded the following:
- i. closer joint working with the inter-agency Chief Scientists Group is desirable. The Chief Scientists Group was requested to advise Committee on future topics for discussion and to bring expertise from the country nature conservation bodies into the process;
 - ii. science leadership is about how evidence is scrutinised and how emerging evidence demands are addressed. A science leadership approach should encompass the co-ordination of approaches to nature conservation;
 - iii. JNCC should take a more proactive role in defining what the science should be; and
 - iv. social science needs to receive more attention from the broader nature conservation community.
- 1.2 Joint Committee had previously started to advance science thinking on an evidence strategy and on protected areas at their March 2013 meeting. The work on protected areas is near completion and the evidence strategy needs to be picked up again by Committee at some stage in the future.

2. Learning from work on protected areas

- 2.1. The work on protected areas has highlighted a number of critical factors to the success of Joint Committee's work on science leadership:
- i. joint authorship with staff from the country conservation bodies has proved extremely useful;
 - ii. a clear communication and consultation process needs to be established from the outset;
 - iii. the purpose of the work and the nature of the final product needs to be clear. Joint Committee might wish to consider setting a general context for all of its science leadership work to help the process. For example, how will the work be published?, who is the intended audience?, to what extent should Committee draw any conclusions or make recommendations?
 - iv. science leadership is not a popular term with JNCC's stakeholders. Thought leadership has also been used at times but is similarly not favoured. If Committee choose to develop a clearer context for the work, it could include consideration of a better term to describe what Committee aims to achieve.

3. Horizon-scanning and forward look

- 3.1 A Joint Committee discussion of future priorities for science leadership and nature conservation more broadly is scheduled for March 2015. A summary of recent futures and horizon-scanning work will be presented to the meeting, including:
- i. academic literature, such as the work of Bill Sutherland (Sutherland *et al.*, 2013¹);
 - ii. country conservation body initiatives including advice and input from Chief Scientists Group;
 - iii. the outcomes of the Defra network horizon-scanning service commissioned from Cranfield.
- 3.2 In previous discussions, Joint Committee have emphasised that they see relatively little of some of JNCC's work. To improve understanding of the wider context of some of the science leadership discussions it might be beneficial to establish a rolling programme of updates to keep Joint Committee aware of the full remit of JNCC's activities. This could take the form of intersessional information papers, presentations or a variety of other measures.

4. Possible themes for future consideration

- 4.1 Some topics for future discussion have already been proposed by Joint Committee and/or the inter-agency Chief Scientists Group. These include:
- i. increasing the role of social sciences in nature conservation;
 - ii. the use of incentive measures;
 - iii. conservation of mobile species;
 - iv. management of invasive species.
- 4.2 The Chief Scientists Group recommends that Joint Committee start discussions around increasing the role of social sciences in nature conservation. This topic could include important issues relating to conflict resolution, links between nature conservation and human well-being/quality of life, and various outputs from the National Ecosystem Assessment follow-on report to be launched on 26 June 2014.
- 4.3 The Chief Scientists Group thought the other topics listed in 4.1 were important but not ready for immediate discussion:
- i. the use of incentive measures will be driven primarily by the country conservation bodies, and the Chief Scientists Group need more time to consider how to proceed and to plan resources;
 - ii. the conservation of widespread and/or mobile species is currently occupying a great deal of time through ongoing work on terrestrial and marine SPAs, harbour porpoise and great crested newt. Joint Committee are already

¹ Trends in Ecology and Evolution 28 (1):16-22

involved to some extent in all of these issues. The science leadership discussion might add most value when these pieces of work are nearer to conclusion. Lessons can then be learnt, and standards and best practice extracted;

- iii. invasive species has been discussed by Joint Committee relatively recently and might benefit from a delay to wait for the various ongoing European and UK processes to conclude before Committee considers the underpinning science and evidence.

4.4 Some additional potential topics were suggested by the Chief Scientists Group:

- i. economics – ecosystem services and natural capital including Living with Environmental Change (LWEC) initiatives and ecosystem assessments;
- ii. landscape – a sense of place and local communities;
- iii. species translocation, reintroduction and re-wilding. The Chief Scientists Group will do more work on this at their next meeting in summer 2014;
- iv. climate change – has the profile dropped too far?