

## JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

### UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2010 AT MERCURE HOTEL, WELSH BACK 5-7, BRISTOL, BS1 4SP

#### **Present**

Mr Archdale  
Dr Bridgewater  
Dr Brown  
Mr Casement  
Mr Christensen  
Mr Crawley  
Mr Duke  
Dr Joyce  
Mr Parry  
Mr Pritchard  
Judith Webb

#### **In attendance**

Dr Fleming  
Dr Goold  
Dr Hawkridge (item 9)  
Mrs McQueen  
Mr Rose  
Mr Seymour  
Mr Thomas  
Mrs Watson  
Mr Yeo

**Apologies:** Professor Hill, Mr Thin and Professor Warren (Members), Dr Jardine, Ms Davies and Mr Tew (Attendees).

#### **1. Chair's opening remarks**

- 1.1 Dr Bridgewater welcomed Mr Robbs from Defra who would provide an overview on the UK Government position to inform Committee's strategy discussions.
- 1.2 Dr Bridgewater informed Committee that Mr Rose had replaced Dr Stott as JNCC's Science Director on a temporary basis. JNCC had greatly benefited from Dr Stott's contribution whilst on secondment from Defra.
- 1.3 Dr Bridgewater thanked Natural England for arranging the field visit the previous day. He also welcomed the participation of Defra policy leads at the gathering the previous evening which had provided the opportunity for issues to be discussed informally between Committee members and Defra officials.

#### **2. Declaration of interests**

- 2.1 Nothing was declared.

#### **3. Amendments to the minutes of the March 2010 meeting (JNCC 10 P03)**

- 3.1 The amended minutes were agreed.

#### **4. Matters arising (JNCC 10 P05)**

- 4.1 The follow-up session on JNCC priorities for European work would be deferred to September's Committee meeting. This meeting would concentrate on strategic planning.
- 4.2 Judith Webb queried progress with the forward programme of events and emphasised the importance of this in engaging independent members. It was agreed to action this as soon as possible.

#### **5. Address from John Robbs, Defra on the coalition Government's priorities**

- 5.1 The Committee received a talk from Mr Robbs on Defra's forward plan in light of the new coalition Government's policies, and a discussion followed. The discussion covered three main subjects:
  - i. 2010/11 finances and input to the Spending Review for 2011-15;
  - ii. expectations of Arms Length Bodies;
  - iii. biodiversity policy priorities.
- 5.2 Dr Bridgewater thanked Mr Robbs for an informative and comprehensive talk and a very useful discussion.

#### **6. Strategy Session**

##### **6A. Planning for the next Government Spending Review 2011-15 (JNCC 10 D09)**

- 6.1 Dr Bridgewater outlined the approach he suggested Committee take to the strategy session.
- 6.2 Each country conservation body provided an overview of their own planning for the Spending Review period in relation to JNCC. Key points raised were:
  - i. as devolution progresses, the need for JNCC becomes more important in many respects;
  - ii. practical support from JNCC where it is well equipped to provide it is welcomed but there may be a diminishing need for broad policy and strategy support in some areas;
  - iii. JNCC may be asked to provide support where the country conservation body is unable to undertake activities itself;
  - iv. the contribution of JNCC to each administration's priorities needs to be explained as its importance is not always well understood.
- 6.3 Mr Yeo explained the approach taken to developing proposals for how JNCC would respond to funding cuts and the process and very tight timescales for submitting these to Government. Committee discussed the proposals in the paper and considered them to be appropriate subject to changes in one or two areas.

- 6.3 It was agreed that Mr Yeo would amend the paper in line with Committee's comments, submit this the following day to Defra (for circulation to the JNCC Sponsors' Group) and to Committee members and regular attendees.

## **6B Streamlining Joint Committee and Board arrangements (JNCC 10 P06)**

- 6.4 Dr Bridgewater introduced the paper which was provided to prompt discussion to guide the development of detailed proposals for consideration at the September meeting.
- 6.5 A number of additional suggestions were made and the following points were raised to consider in the development of proposals:
- i. good governance will be essential during the challenging period ahead;
  - ii. policy and governance responsibilities could be dealt with in different ways;
  - iii. the cost in time and money to the country conservation bodies, and the impact of different models on Committee cohesion, would need to be factored in.
- 6.6 It was agreed that Mr Pritchard and Judith Webb would lead the development of proposals to be brought back to Committee in September.

## **7. Report from the Marine Protected Areas Sub-Group (JNCC 10 N04)**

- 7.1 Dr Goold introduced the report from the Marine Protected Areas Sub-Group. The Committee **agreed** that:
- i. the terms of reference require amendment and should be reviewed by Committee at its next meeting. In particular:
    - a. consideration should be given to incorporating issues relating to the Overseas Territories (e.g. the Chagos Marine Protected Area);
    - b. it may be appropriate for the sub-group to take on a role in advising on wider marine issues at some future date particularly as the designation phase of many marine sites is concluded, and management issues arise.
- 7.2 A forthcoming meeting with governments to discuss offshore SPAs was noted.

## **8. Site proposal for Pisces Reef Complex (JNCC 10 P04)**

- 8.1 Dr Goold introduced the paper and outlined the content. In discussion the following points were raised:
- i. the vulnerability to damage (para 2.14) is described as 'moderate'. It was suggested that the site could be 'extremely vulnerable' to damage;

- ii. the relative importance of species and species assemblages in terms of rarity is not drawn out in the paper.
- 8.2 Subject to further consideration of the points noted in 8.1, Committee **endorsed** the recommendation of Pisces Reef Complex to Defra as an offshore SAC..
- 9. Charting Progress 2: implications and opportunities for JNCC (JNCC 10 D08)**
  - 9.1 Dr Hawkrigde gave a presentation of *Charting Progress 2* project.
  - 9.2 The Committee **agreed** that:
    - i. the draft JNCC press release written for the launch of *Charting Progress 2* in July 2010, should be revised with input from the country conservation bodies to ensure maximum impact. Dr Brown volunteered his expertise.
    - ii. Committee to consider whether a further paper was required in the future.
  - 9.3 Dr Bridgewater thanked Dr Hawkrigde for an informative and comprehensive presentation
- 10. Report from the Executive Management Board (JNCC 10 N05)**
  - 10.1 Mr Yeo introduced the paper which sets out key issues addressed by the Executive Management Board since the last report to Committee.
  - 10.2 Committee **noted** the paper and made the following comments:
    - i. the move to the new Aberdeen office which is shared with SNH and SEPA is a good example of co-operative working and is to be congratulated;
    - ii. a new chair of the Forestry Commission has been appointed (Pam Warhurst) and there is scope for further partnership working.
  - 10.3 Dr Bridgewater noted that he will meet the new Defra Minister, Richard Benyon, on 12 July.
- 11. Any other business**
  - 11.1 Committee discussed the process for signing off amendments to the list of terrestrial SACs as part of the UK network and agreed to delegate this to Dr Bridgewater.