



## **JNCC Triennial Review implementation report**

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## **About JNCC**

JNCC is the public body that advises the UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide and international nature conservation. It was originally established under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and reconstituted by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. JNCC is led by the Joint Committee, which brings together members from the nature conservation bodies for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and independent members appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under an independent Chair.

JNCC's work contributes to maintaining and enriching biological diversity and sustaining natural systems. These provide the core services upon which humans depend, including fresh water, clean air and food. In this way they contribute to economic growth and social wellbeing and are integral to sustainable development.

## **Background**

The report on JNCC's Triennial Review was published in June 2013. The report contained six conclusions intended to improve JNCC's efficient delivery of the UK's environmental priorities in the face of future challenges.

This paper summarises how the report's conclusions have been implemented. Details are provided in Annex 1.

Excellent progress has been made in implementing all of the Triennial Review conclusions, leading to tangible benefits in JNCC's ability to deliver government priorities. Some further work is needed to clarify JNCC's role in science leadership and this will be taken forward over the next few months under the guidance of JNCC's new Chair, Professor Chris Gilligan.

## **Working with stakeholders (Conclusion 1 of the Review)**

JNCC works with a large number of organisations in Government and in civil society. Through partnerships we support co-ordination and collaboration at a UK scale to achieve shared goals in a cost-effective manner. However, the Triennial Review concluded that JNCC's relationships with its customers could be improved, and in particular recommended that partnership working with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) could be improved in several areas.

JNCC already has highly effective partnerships with a range of NGOs, including the British Trust for Ornithology and Butterfly Conservation. In this way we are able to harness the efforts of thousands of volunteers to provide essential information on biodiversity status and trends across the UK.

We have stepped up our engagement with NGOs primarily by reinvigorating and expanding the membership of an existing JNCC-NGO forum to deal with UK nature conservation issues and establishing a new forum to deal with issues in the Overseas Territories. Each of these forums has met twice in the past year, and has helped to strengthen working relationships. The Overseas Territories forum has focused on developing a framework of shared priorities for these important areas for global biodiversity where many species are endemic and so are found nowhere else in the world. The UK forum has covered a wide range of topics, including discussion of JNCC's priorities and the role of protected areas.

*“The creation of a joint NGOs/JNCC series of meetings on UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies has been a positive step, which we hope will lead rapidly to a framework of priorities shared by NGO and official bodies for targeting British support for conservation in its territories. We are pleased to be exploring with JNCC other areas of governmental/NGO co-operation, potentially to restore high levels of efficacy and cost-effectiveness, and are encouraged by the positive engagement too of JNCC’s new Chair.”*

Mike Pienkowski, Honorary Executive Director, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

### **High-quality science (Conclusion 2 of the Review)**

JNCC has a long-standing reputation as a provider of objective, science-based evidence. The Triennial Review acknowledged this and recommended that we review our internal arrangements for promoting high-quality science, based on agreed priorities.

The Joint Committee has played a lead role in implementing this recommendation. It has strengthened its role in developing scientific thinking on key nature conservation issues across the UK, supported by JNCC staff and the inter-agency Chief Scientists Group. The first manifestation of this has been the development of some critical thinking, led by our former Chair Dr Peter Bridgewater, on the role of protected areas in halting biodiversity loss as part of a wider suite of measures – an excellent example of collaboration between staff from JNCC and the country conservation bodies. JNCC’s science leadership role will be developed further under the JNCC’s new Chair, Professor Chris Gilligan.

*“SNH welcomes the leadership of the JNCC, through both the Committee and the inter-agency Chief Scientists Group, in developing nature conservation science and its application to meet the new challenges and opportunities we face in the 21st century. The JNCC-led review of the role of protected areas is an example of this leadership, as has been its work on developing a UK marine monitoring and surveillance strategy.”*

Ron Macdonald, Director of Policy and Advice, Scottish Natural Heritage

We have maintained and strengthened partnerships to deliver high-quality science that is cost-effective and meets multiple needs. For example:

- we have continued to collaborate with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and Marine Scotland Science to undertake marine surveys to support identification, designation and management of marine protected areas;
- we chair a new Ecosystems Task Force under the Living with Environmental Change programme, which brings together government, research and business organisations to facilitate the use of knowledge in enabling decision makers to take better account of nature’s value;

- we have contributed actively to Defra’s One Network Evidence project, including the preparation of an evidence strategy for the Defra network.

To ensure that the quality of JNCC scientific advice and evidence is fit for purpose JNCC rolled out a new evidence quality policy in April 2014.

### **Committee membership and ways of working (Conclusion 3 of the Review)**

The Triennial Review report recommended that government administrations and JNCC should explore options to ensure that the membership of the Joint Committee and its ways of working allow the views of all sponsor bodies to be better represented, in particular Northern Ireland.

One of the strengths of the Joint Committee is that it brings together representatives from the four countries of the UK, together with independent experts, to consider issues affecting nature conservation across the UK and internationally. The country representatives on Committee provide an important link to Defra and the devolved administrations, helping JNCC to understand and deliver the administrations’ shared priorities.

These arrangements have generally worked well in England, Scotland and Wales but have sometimes been weaker in relation to Northern Ireland because of different institutional arrangements. We have addressed this by widening the participation of Northern Ireland bodies in Joint Committee business – representatives from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Marine Division of the Department of Environment in Northern Ireland now attend Committee meetings alongside the formal Committee members from the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside. These arrangements have been successful in improving relationships with Northern Irish institutions and enabling them to have a stronger role in JNCC governance.

*“The Triennial Review produced many benefits from a Northern Ireland point of view. As well as providing a more equitable funding arrangement, the review resulted in greater transparency in identifying specific services and expertise which JNCC provides to DOE. Another positive aspect of the review is the representation of senior DOE staff at Joint Committee meetings which has overcome the anomaly with the rest of the UK of not having an independent conservation body in Northern Ireland. Overall, the Triennial Review was a very worthwhile exercise which has resulted in a much closer and open working relationship between JNCC and DOE.”*

Ken Bradley, Department of Environment, Northern Ireland

In November 2013, JNCC’s governance arrangements were streamlined and simplified, e.g. to redefine the role of the Joint Committee in relation to the Company Board. The new arrangements have strengthened non-executive oversight of JNCC and provided greater clarity for government sponsors.

### **Offshore marine functions (Conclusions 4 and 5 of the Review)**

One of JNCC’s key functions is to advise government and others on nature conservation in UK offshore waters (beyond 12 nautical miles). This has the advantage of enabling a coherent approach across the entire offshore zone, but provides a challenge in ensuring coherence with devolved implementation in inshore waters (within 12 miles).

The Triennial Review concluded that there is currently no strong evidence to move all offshore marine delivery functions from JNCC to the country conservation bodies but recommended JNCC should explore further the delegation of renewable energy casework advice to country conservation bodies including Natural England.

In November 2013 the Joint Committee agreed to formally delegate responsibility for advising on renewables casework in offshore English waters to Natural England. A phased handover is now complete. This should achieve a more streamlined and efficient service to the renewables industry and regulators operating in English waters, and allow JNCC to take an enhanced role in providing advice and facilitation on strategic UK-wide issues relating to renewables.

*“This delegation of responsibility is important for two key reasons. It allows us to have one statutory point of contact for nature conservation input to our English offshore projects, which is much more efficient. It also allows JNCC’s greater involvement in the strategic work urgently required to address ecological challenges to offshore consenting. The offshore renewables industry needs timely, cost-effective, and clear advice which does not delay the delivery of vital energy infrastructure”.*

David Walker, Offshore Development Director, Scottish Power Renewables

Committee will consider JNCC’s future offshore marine role as part of a wider review of organisational strategy intended to conclude in spring 2015. Further discussion with government administrations will take place at an appropriate time.

The Committee and support company are taking account of the need for flexibility in the face of possible future change, for example in reviewing JNCC’s organisational structure.

### **Funding (Conclusion 6 of the Review)**

One of the conclusions of the Triennial Review was that Defra and devolved administrations, in collaboration with JNCC, should undertake an analysis of JNCC’s funding and a review of the funding formula.

Following a detailed analysis of JNCC’s work and beneficiaries, Defra and devolved ministers have agreed new funding arrangements which are being implemented from 2014/15. A crucial feature is that the new arrangements enable funders to see clearly the link between the funding they provide and the benefits they derive.

We have revised our quarterly performance reporting procedures so that we provide clearer reports to our sponsors – giving them the information they need to understand and scrutinise JNCC’s performance, and make decisions where appropriate.

### **Next steps**

The majority of the conclusions from the Triennial Review have now been implemented and are embedded in JNCC’s activities. The outstanding action in relation to scientific leadership is being progressed as part of a review of JNCC’s strategy, which will be completed by March 2015 with input from Defra and the devolved administrations.

The strategy review will help set the future direction for JNCC and enable the organisation to be responsive to the evolving requirements of the four administrations.

## Annex 1. Implementation of the conclusions from JNCC's Triennial Review

RAG status	Definition
GREEN	Action completed.
AMBER	Good progress has been made but the action has not yet been fully completed.
RED	No or limited progress has been made.

Report conclusion	Further information from the report	Action	Progress
1. JNCC will build on its current partnership working with stakeholders, and in particular improve engagement with civil society, including with the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.	<i>Para 22.</i> JNCC's relationships with its customers, including the UK Government, Devolved Administrations, country conservation bodies and civil society could be improved. This includes drawing further on the expertise available from other organisations particularly volunteers to deliver JNCC's aims.	1a. Reinvigorate the JNCC-NGO forum (with extended membership and with a separate Overseas Territories forum) as a mechanism for engaging with NGOs at a senior level on UK issues, including an annual session with Joint Committee.	A UK JNCC-NGO forum with expanded membership and a new Overseas Territories JNCC-NGO forum have been established. They met for the first time in November 2013 and January 2014 respectively, and further meetings have taken during 2014.
	<i>Para 23.</i> Partnership working with civil society could be improved in several areas such as the collection of biodiversity evidence in the terrestrial and marine environments (see Annex 1) in the UK and advising on nature conservation in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. This will help	1b. Strengthen liaison with Environment Links: i) inviting them to meet with Committee every two years in accordance with the meeting rotation cycle, and ii) attending country Environment Links strategic meetings.	The four Environment Links are members of the expanded UK JNCC-NGO forum. No additional action is considered to be necessary.

Report conclusion	Further information from the report	Action	Progress
	<p>achieve the best and informed environmental outcomes, while maintaining and enhancing JNCC's close relationship with Defra, the Devolved Administrations and country conservation bodies, and achieving better value for the tax payer.</p>	<p>1c. Identify where existing partnerships with NGOs could be developed to produce additional outputs, in particular in making evidence on Overseas Territories Biodiversity available.</p>	<p>Partnership agreements with NGOs are being reviewed as they come up for renegotiation.</p> <p>An Overseas Territories JNCC-NGO forum has been established as reported under 1a. The main task of this group in 2014 has been to discuss a framework of priorities to support future collaboration.</p>
<p>2. JNCC, in collaboration with Defra, devolved administrations and the country conservation bodies will review its internal arrangements to ensure that it is able to promote high-quality science, based on agreed priorities, and provide a clear voice for the UK nature conservation bodies nationally and abroad.</p>	<p><i>Para 24.</i> Some stakeholders asked that JNCC examine whether it had the best arrangements in place internally to provide strong scientific leadership on biodiversity and ecosystems that Government and other stakeholders require. JNCC's strengths in coordination of surveillance of terrestrial and marine biodiversity were widely acknowledged, including the importance of partnerships developed with the voluntary sector and the application of science-based advice to government policy.</p>	<p>2a. Committee to play a stronger role in developing science thinking on key nature conservation issues across the UK supported by papers from staff in collaboration with Chief Scientists Group and other inter-agency groups.</p>	<p>Committee is now playing a stronger science leadership role. Over the past year its focus has been on developing thinking in relation to protected areas. A workshop on this topic, involving the NGO and academic communities, will take place in October 2014. Future science leadership topics will be considered as part of a review of JNCC's strategy, to be completed by March 2015.</p>

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			The Chief Scientists Group has established a process to advise Committee on topics for discussion. They will also facilitate wider country body engagement with the production of Committee papers.
		2b. Develop and implement new evidence quality assurance policies, standards and procedures.	JNCC's new evidence quality policy has been agreed by EMB and Committee. It was rolled out across JNCC in April 2014.
		2c. Investigate further the role JNCC (including Committee) should play in science leadership.	<p>This is partly discharged by 2a.</p> <p>Discussions have taken place with Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser to discuss JNCC's role, especially in relation to Defra's One Network Evidence project.</p> <p>Some further work is needed to clarify JNCC's role in relation to similar roles within its key stakeholders and establishing a clear JNCC voice.</p>
		2d. Contribute to the evidence workstream of Defra's Strategic Alignment Programme, in particular to support prioritisation and integration of evidence work across Defra bodies taking	JNCC has contributed fully to the evidence workstream of Defra's Strategic Alignment programme, including through secondment of staff. Defra has produced a new Evidence Strategy for the

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		account of the requirements of the devolved administrations.	network, which takes due account of JNCC's evidence role and priorities.
<p>3. Defra and devolved administrations, working with the Joint Committee, will explore options to ensure that the membership of the Committee and its ways of working allow the views of all sponsor bodies to be better represented. This could include exploring legislative options to provide eligibility to the sponsor Department in Northern Ireland to be represented on the Joint Committee.</p>	<p><i>Para 25.</i> As a consequence of the provisions of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, the representation on JNCC's Committee might not fairly reflect all its principal sponsors. This is especially true for Northern Ireland, whose structures differ from those in Great Britain. We will explore options to address this, including possible legislative change.</p> <p>Also see comments against conclusions 1 and 6 and actions against conclusion 6.</p>	<p>3a. Implement agreed changes to Committee/ Board arrangements to give a clearer line of sight to the devolved administrations. These include incorporating business management matters into Joint Committee meetings (attended by country conservation body/NIEA executives) and rotating two Committee meetings per year round the countries to provide opportunities for devolved administrations to engage with Committee.</p> <p>3b. Prepare options for improving Committee engagement with DoE(NI) in collaboration with NIEA and CNCC for discussion with DoE(NI).</p>	<p>New governance arrangements were implemented in November 2013.</p> <p>A representative from the Marine Division in the NI Department of Environment now attends Committee meetings, alongside a representative from NIEA and the formal Committee members from CNCC.</p> <p>A representative from the Marine Division has also joined the inter-agency Chief Scientists Group alongside the NIEA</p>

Report conclusion	Further information from the report	Action	Progress
			representative.
<p>4. There is currently no strong evidence to move all offshore marine delivery functions from JNCC to country conservation bodies such as Natural England. However, the Scottish and Welsh Administrations have confirmed that they will want to consider this again in due course.</p>	<p><i>Para 28.</i> This assessment [of EA, NE and JNCC marine functions] identified further scope to improve the way in which certain marine functions are delivered such as better join up between JNCC and NE in providing marine conservation advice. Stakeholders, in particular those from the renewable energy sector, expressed some concern about clarity of NE and JNCC's roles around the delivery of advice, in particular for offshore renewable cases.</p> <p><i>Annex 1.</i> Examining qualitative costs and benefits showed there might be some benefits to customer service from moving marine conservation advice to conservation agencies but it was recognised that national marine customers would still need to engage with different agencies in different parts of the UK. Moving all conservation advice delivery to country conservation bodies was considered to have a potentially de-</p>	<p>3c. Implement a structured approach to managing relationships with sponsors, ensuring effective communication and consultation.</p> <p>4a. Committee to have a strategic orientation discussion. Further action subsequently.</p>	<p>Responsibility for engaging with key stakeholders has been assigned to the Chief Executive and Directors and mechanisms for sharing information have been put in place.</p> <p>Committee discussed JNCC's future offshore marine role in March 2014, and it will be considered more fully as part of a review of JNCC's strategy, to be completed by March 2015. Further discussion with government administrations will take place at an appropriate time.</p> <p>The Committee and support company are taking account of the need for flexibility in the face of possible future change, for example in reviewing JNCC's organisational structure.</p>

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	stabilising effect on JNCC and possibly affect the delivery of its UK coordination work.		
5. JNCC and Natural England will work more collaboratively when providing marine conservation advice that spans the 12 nautical mile boundary. In particular they will explore further the delegation of renewable energy advice from JNCC to country conservation bodies including Natural England. This should produce a more streamlined and efficient service to the customer.	As for conclusion 4 above.  <i>Annex 1.</i> The tools for [enhancing join up of conservation advice between delivery bodies without making formal changes to role, functions or significant organisational changes] include: improving communication with stakeholders – better outward communication to clarify the role of Agencies and aid signposting of advice; formal agreements between agencies that set out roles and responsibilities in the provision of advice; building on existing powers for inter-agency delegation of responsibility; and contractual arrangements for specific tasks.	5a. Committee decision regarding possible delegation of renewable energy casework in offshore English waters to Natural England.	Committee approved the delegation of renewable casework to Natural England in November and the authorisation document was subsequently signed by the Chief Executives of JNCC and Natural England.
		5b. If delegation is agreed – implement delegation and provide support to NE until handover is completed.	Handover of casework to Natural England is now complete.
6. Defra and Devolved Administrations, in collaboration with JNCC, will undertake an	<i>Para 30.</i> ... there was a strong appetite for change in terms of clearly identifying exactly what the various contributions from UK Government and from devolved	6a. Support sponsors in reviewing funding streams and formula through the provision of information providing a clear line	New funding arrangements were agreed by Defra and devolved ministers and implemented in April 2014. These provide

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<p>analysis of the funding of the JNCC and a review of the funding formula to: determine a fair apportionment of grant-in-aid going forward; secure best value for money; and provide clarity on how JNCC delivers its functions for the sponsoring bodies.</p>	<p>administrations pay for in terms of delivery. This would not only improve transparency for the sponsor organisations, but also improve accountability and help achieve better value for money for both taxpayers and customers ... JNCC and Defra will be working with the Devolved Administrations on an Analysis of Funding of the JNCC, along with a review of the funding formula, to ensure a fair apportionment of how grant-in-aid is determined going forward.</p>	<p>of sight between work areas and beneficiaries.</p>	<p>transparency and a clear relationship between funding responsibility and benefits.</p>
		<p>6b. Review and revise reporting and associated support systems to align them with external and internal reporting requirements.</p>	<p>New reporting formats have been introduced for the 2014/15 reporting year.</p>
		<p>6c. Plan and begin preparatory work to enable the value for money of in-house provision of services to be assessed against provision by the new Shared Service Centre governed by Cabinet Office.</p>	<p>Implementation of a new Governance and Corporate Services strategy within JNCC has begun. This will align in-house routine services with those provided through shared services and develop a business partnering approach for strategic and complex management and administrative work.</p>
		<p>6d. Contribute to Defra's Strategic Alignment Programme, in particular to establish where common corporate services across the Defra network can secure better value for money for JNCC (this covers corporate services not provided by the Shared Service Centre such as IT and procurement).</p>	<p>JNCC is out of scope of phase 1 implementation of Defra's Future Corporate Services programme, which will transfer selected support services from some network bodies to a new directorate within Defra which became operational in October 2014. However, when the necessary information exists we will undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the options. This will include the extent to which governance and control</p>

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			arrangements are consistent with JNCC's accountability to all four UK administrations.