

JNCC NATIONAL CONTACT POINT FOR EU LIFE FUNDING – CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Conflict of interest statement

1. Introduction and purpose

JNCC is the statutory adviser to UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide and international nature conservation. Originally established under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, JNCC was reconstituted by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) 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. Our role is to provide evidence, information and advice so that decisions are made that protect natural resources and systems.

JNCC's specific role is to work on nature conservation issues that affect the UK as a whole and internationally:

- As UK Government's nature conservation advisor in European and global fora we take forward issues from the four countries in the UK to inform policy development. We then provide support to ensure that European and international requirements are understood and implemented through national policies and actions within a devolved UK.
- We provide objective advice on the priorities for creating a cost-effective evidence-base for use across the UK and the investment required to make it happen. We devise strategies for collecting and using data and provide tools and mechanisms to enable others to make their data freely available.
- We play a key role in the UK's offshore marine nature conservation. That includes identifying, monitoring and advising on how protected areas are run and providing advice on the impacts of offshore industries.
- We also support nature conservation in the UK's 14 Overseas Territories and three Crown Dependencies (OCTs), all of which are important for global biodiversity and geodiversity.

JNCC is also the UK's National Contact Point (NCP) for EU LIFE funding. As part of this role JNCC is:

- Promoting the LIFE programme with information on participation and annual calls.
- Providing a thorough advisory service for potential UK applicants, including information and support on developing proposals and a proposal pre-screening service.
- Improving the quality and quantity of applications that are successful in implementing EU environmental policy in the UK.
- developing the competence and capacity of prospective applicants including from the OCTs and Gibraltar in their ability to access LIFE funds.
- Assisting with clarifying roles and responsibilities of the beneficiaries in a project, including their respective contractual relationship with the Commission.
- Giving detailed advice on producing sufficiently detailed and realistic estimates of costs and meeting financial requirements.

Whilst these roles are largely complementary, there could be a perception that JNCC as both a potential beneficiary and having a key role in promoting and advising on EU funding, has an unfair advantage or influence over European Commission decisions on funding awards. It may be perceived that JNCC has an unfair advantage in having an advisory and support role on accessing EU resources, specifically having access to proposals and concept notes which are submitted to the LIFE NCP for

advice. These issues could give rise to a conflict or potential conflict of interest and JNCC is committed to deal with any conflict in a fair and prompt way.

2. Conflict of Interest Policy

A conflict of interest policy is required in order to:

- mitigate these risks and strike a balance between the demands resulting from our different roles;
- protect the integrity of JNCC's decision-making process;
- enable our stakeholders to have confidence in our integrity; and
- and protect the integrity and reputation of our staff;

JNCC has adopted this conflict of interest policy and adheres to a set of principles including transparency, impartiality, clarity and responsibility whenever we are acting in our different roles and dealing with stakeholders internally and externally.

3. Principles

In developing JNCC's approach to corporate governance and mindful of the organisation's purpose and roles, JNCC has a number of governance principles that aim to guide our operational responses to the management of our multiple roles. These principles are:

- i. clarity as to the extent of our different roles and our statutory responsibilities;
- ii. transparency as a fundamental requirement for our dealings both internally and externally;
- iii. impartiality and neutrality in all our decision making processes and advice;
- iv. responsibility in acting in the public's interest and according to our statutory obligations;
- v. functional separation of roles where necessary, in recognition that JNCC is one organisation with different roles; and
- vi. confidentiality when dealing with information and requests submitted to the NCP.

It is our responsibility to use evidence and judgement to agree the optimal course of action recognising all our roles, the specific legislation under which we operate and our overarching purpose.

4. Our response

JNCC's response to managing our different roles is highlighted in the flow chart contained in Annex 1. In managing our multiple roles our response is three-fold:

- i. We have a robust corporate conflict of interest policy in place;
- ii. All staff have to be aware of the policy and those providing input to the NCP role sign a declaration form;
- iii. A clear, transparent and impartial decision making process is in place regarding advice we give as part of our NCP role, as set out in the flow chart in the Annex.

ANNEX: Flow chart outlining JNCC's multiple roles and responsibilities and the Col response

JNCC AS A BIDDER FOR EUROPEAN LIFE FUNDING OR REVIEWER OF FUNDING BIDS:

<p>ROLE 1: JNCC AS STATUTORY NATURE CONSERVATION ADVISOR</p> <p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JNCC's specific role is to work on nature conservation issues that affect the UK as a whole and internationally. As UK Government's nature conservation advisor in European and global fora we take forward issues from the four countries in the UK to inform policy development. We then provide support to ensure that European and international requirements are understood and implemented through national policies and actions within a devolved UK. We provide objective advice on the priorities for creating a cost-effective evidence-base for use across the UK and the investment required to make it happen. We devise strategies for collecting and using data and provide tools and mechanisms to enable others to make their data freely available. We play a key role in the UK's offshore marine nature conservation. That includes identifying, monitoring and advising on how protected areas are run and providing advice on the impacts of offshore industries. We also support nature conservation in the UK's 14 Overseas Territories and three Crown Dependencies (OCTs), all of which are important for global biodiversity and geodiversity.
<p>ROLE 2: JNCC AS THE UK's NATIONAL CONTACT POINT (NCP) FOR EU LIFE FUNDING</p> <p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the LIFE programme with information on participation and annual calls. Providing a thorough advisory service for potential UK applicants, including information and support on developing proposals and a proposal pre-screening service. Improving the quality and quantity of applications that are successful in implementing EU environmental policy in the UK and developing the competence and capacity of prospective applicants including from the OCTs and Gibraltar in their ability to access LIFE funds. Assistance with clarifying roles and responsibilities of the beneficiaries in a project, including their respective contractual relationship with the Commission. Detailed advice on producing sufficiently detailed and realistic estimates of costs and meeting financial requirements.



RESPONSE								
Conflict of Interest (Col) and Evidence Quality Assurance (EQA) policies in place and publicly available on the JNCC's and NCP's websites. All staff are aware of and adhere to JNCC's Col and EQA policies	Staff working at the NCP sign a Col declaration form. Transparent information on roles and responsibilities at the NCP is available on both JNCC's and the NCP's websites	Functional separation of roles when JNCC bids for funding, i.e. NCP staff strictly adhere to role 2 and get not involved in putting the bid together	All decisions made as the reviewer of or advisor on EU LIFE funding bids are underpinned by a robust and transparent EQA policy	All information submitted to the NCP will be dealt with confidentially and will be protected by the Data Protection Act. All advice given on concept notes and bids is impartial, neutral, transparent and professional.	JNCC's guidance on applying for EU funds is available to all staff on the intranet	Principle based approach to guide our operational responses to the management of our multiple roles, including: Transparency, Clarity, Responsibility, Impartiality, Neutrality and Confidentiality	Potential bids will be discussed at interagency level and UK Government level at the Funding IAG and the Government's ALB Group	Compliance with this policy will be monitored and reported to the Executive Management Board

