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European nature conservation

*JNCC provides advice on
European policies that affect
the conservation of the UK's
biodiversity and geodiversity*

Nature conservation in the UK is strongly influenced by legislation and policies from the European Community, in particular the Birds and Habitats Directives. These directives provide measures for the protection and management of habitats and species of European importance and require the identification of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats and non-bird species. Together these form the Natura 2000 network of protected sites.

The UK Nature and Landscape Office in Brussels provides JNCC and the UK country agencies with a base for operations in Europe, enhancing our ability to supply advice on nature conservation issues. In May, the Office marked the EU's Green Week by hosting a reception for leading figures in European nature conservation. The UK Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs, Barry Gardiner MP, and the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Stavros Dimas, addressed more than 200 people as part of the event.

The marine environment was high on the European agenda during the reporting year. JNCC was engaged in efforts to resolve differences in the interpretation of marine habitat descriptions under the Habitats Directive.

We also provided advice to Defra on the draft European Marine Strategy Directive as it developed and co-ordinated a joint GB agency response to the European Maritime Green Paper. The publication of this response has enabled us to promote our views in Europe, and these have been well-received by decision-makers and those advocating a positive approach to marine nature conservation that takes account of wider social and economic issues.

During the reporting year JNCC also hosted a meeting of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity. The Topic Centre is a consortium of organisations that provide support to the European Environment Agency on behalf of the European Commission's Environment Directorate-General. One aspect of the Topic Centre's work which received particular emphasis was the Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators project. JNCC and country agency staff chaired/contributed to three of the project's six expert groups and to the co-ordination team.

Another significant area of work for JNCC in the reporting year related to the implementation of the Habitats Directive in the UK (see section 7).



Ross worm

Sabellaria spinulosa

(Far left) *Sabellaria spinulosa*, or ross worm, is a tube-dwelling worm that lives in relatively shallow seas around the UK. It can grow to about 30 cm long and forms reefs that look like coral. *Sabellaria* reefs are expected to be among those areas that will be put forward for designation as Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive.

Little is known about *Sabellaria* so during the reporting year JNCC collaborated with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science and Envision consultants to discover more about the habits of the species, and to discover the best method to detect the reefs it forms.

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Green Week reception

(Left) The UK Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs, Barry Gardiner MP (second left), meets (from left) Poul Christensen, Deputy Chairman of Natural England, Chris Davies MEP, Deryck Steer, JNCC Managing Director, and Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for the Environment, at the UK Nature and Landscape Office's Green Week reception in Brussels.

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