



6

Environmental pressures on nature conservation

We are working to promote a healthy environment worldwide in which people and wildlife can co-exist in a sustainable way

Our vision and strategy have put our work firmly within the context of sustainable development. That means JNCC is now increasingly concerned with how nature conservation has a bearing on human society – and how social and economic pressures influence biodiversity.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (www.maweb.org) has drawn attention to the way in which human wellbeing and ecosystem health are interconnected. Its publication in 2005 described how many ecosystems worldwide are being degraded and highlighted the importance of valuing ecosystem goods and services in terms of the benefits they provide to human society.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has prompted increased interest in the role environmental economics can play in nature conservation policy. To strengthen our expertise in this area we recruited Emily McKenzie as an Environmental Economics Adviser. During the reporting year, Emily has worked to integrate an understanding of economics within JNCC's future work. As part of that capacity-building effort, workshops were held for JNCC staff aimed at developing understanding of environmental economics. A similar workshop was also organised for Defra staff.

We also raised the profile of environmental economics at an Overseas Territories

conference in October (see section 3). Following that event we have prepared an environmental economics toolkit to be used by individual Territories in policy making.

During the year, JNCC established an Inter-Agency Climate Change Forum, chaired by Joint Committee member Professor Michael Usher. The Forum met for the first time in November. It will enable JNCC and the country agencies to provide robust, co-ordinated advice on the relationships between climate change and nature conservation and in particular the measures needed to build healthy, resilient ecosystems that can adapt to future changes in climate, while also providing wider economic and social benefits.

Ian Mitchell of JNCC's Seabirds and Cetaceans Team contributed to an assessment of the potential impacts of climate change on the marine environment for the first annual report card of the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership, a group of governmental and non-governmental organisations, who have come together to inform key decision-makers.

JNCC also continued to support the inter-agency Land Use Policy Group, which focussed over the year on preparing to influence future reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy, in particular the 'health check' in 2008.



Bumblebee feeding

(Far left) The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment drew attention to the widespread degradation of ecosystems across the globe. This has implications for the resilience of ecosystems to impacts such as climate change.

For example, many species of plant rely on bumblebees and other insects to pollinate their flowers. Fully-functioning ecosystems are more likely to have a range of different pollinating insects, while less healthy ones will not. If climate change has an adverse impact on the population of one pollinator species healthy ecosystems are more likely to be able to withstand that loss than less healthy ones.

© Duncan McEwan/naturepl.com

View of coastline in Flatts, Bermuda

(Left) JNCC assisted three Overseas Territories in the Caribbean – Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and Montserrat – to plan environmental valuation studies. Bermuda successfully obtained funds from the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) to run a two year environmental valuation project in 2007–2009, in partnership with JNCC. The study will look at the benefits that the environment provides to people in Bermuda, in the context of a priority policy question.

© Emily McKenzie/JNCC