



REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

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JNCC SUPPORT CO. BOARD

REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Paper by Marcus Yeo

1. This paper summarises significant issues relating to the running of the company which are not covered by other Board or Audit and Risk Management Committee papers. A corresponding report has been made to the Joint Committee on relevant matters.
2. **Peterborough office accommodation**
 - 2.1 As noted in the EMB report to the company board in September, the lease on JNCC's office accommodation in Peterborough (Monkstone House) expires in March 2011. The Westminster government's approach to managing the Civil Estate has continued to evolve over the last few months, and one consequence of this is that the criteria used to assess accommodation options for public bodies have changed. In particular, the position has changed regarding surplus Government estate.
 - 2.2 JNCC staff are working with Defra Estates to prepare a new business case for JNCC's head office accommodation, in line with the revised criteria. The business case will re-evaluate central Peterborough options. Options for remaining in Monkstone House, occupying either one or two floors, will be included. All options will require us to remain in Monkstone House beyond March 2011.
3. **Clear Line of Sight**
 - 3.1 The Treasury's Clear Line of Sight initiative¹ is intended to ensure that Government's financial reporting to parliament is more consistent, transparent and straightforward. One of the key principles of this initiative is that all government grants to non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) that are funded by more than one government department or administration should flow through the main sponsor department of that NDPB. In JNCC's case, this means that all grant in aid (including that provided by the devolved administrations) will be channelled through Defra. However, this will not affect the devolved administrations' responsibility for, and control of, the funding they provide to JNCC.
 - 3.2 JNCC's governance arrangements will need to be adjusted to reflect this change. Subject to further discussion, it is likely that the Chief Executive of Natural England will no longer act as lead Accounting Officer for JNCC on behalf of the three country conservation bodies and the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland. Instead, JNCC's Managing Director will be appointed Accounting Officer for JNCC and the line of accountability will pass directly from JNCC to Defra.

¹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_clear_line_of_sight_intro.htm

- 3.3 The changes will not reduce the country conservation bodies' influence over the direction and priorities of JNCC. The major mechanisms which allow for this are membership of the Joint Committee, advice to the respective government administration, and participation in the JNCC Sponsors' Group. To improve the clarity of advice provided by the country conservation bodies to their administrations it may be helpful for Committee attendees from the country bodies to be members of the Sponsors' Group.

4. 2009/10 accounts

- 4.1 At their September meeting, the Audit and Risk Management Committee discussed the qualification of JNCC's accounts for 2009/10 due to irregular expenditure, and approved actions to prevent similar problems arising in the future. The actions focused on improving liaison between JNCC and Natural England, and ensuring that robust business cases are produced for all significant expenditure. Natural England's Chief Executive, Helen Phillips, has confirmed that she is content with these arrangements.