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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE, HELD ON THURSDAY 20 MARCH 2003 AT MONKSTONE HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH.

Present:

Mrs Bryan (Chair)
Dr Blakiston-Houston
Sir M Doughty
Dr Faulkner
Professor Heal
Professor Ingram
Mr Lloyd Jones
Dr Moser
Professor Pentreath

In attendance:

Miss Bigger (secretariat)
Dr Brown
Dr Johnston (item 7)
Mr Jones (item 14)
Dr McLean (item 9)
Mr Little (item 6)
Miss Moore (item 10)
Dr Rose (item 9)
Mr Steer
Mr Thomas
Dr Vincent
Mr Yeo

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1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

- 1.1 Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming observers and in particular Professor Doyle who will be joining Committee as an independent member from 1 April 2003.
- 1.2 Chairman also welcomed Dr Brown to the meeting as the newly appointed Chief Executive of English Nature.
- 1.3 Apologies were received from Mr Cameron, Mr Scott and Dr Markland. Chairman advised that representatives from Scottish Natural Heritage had unfortunately had to send apologies at short notice. SNH had sent comments to the meeting regarding the agenda items and these are included in the minutes where appropriate.
- 1.4 Chairman noted that it was the last meeting for Professor Heal, who had served as an independent member of Committee for six and a half years. Chairman thanked Professor Heal for the enormous contribution he had made to Committee both in terms of governance and science issues. In particular, on governance issues, Professor Heal had been a member of the Audit and Resources sub-group and the FMPR sub-group. In addition, Professor Heal stepped in as Acting Chair at the September 2002 meeting, providing important continuity to Committee. In terms of science areas, Professor Heal had contributed to work on species status assessment, the inter-agency group on translocations policy and the Quinquennial Review of protected species. Professor Heal's expertise and knowledge, his support to staff in the Support Unit and also his sense of humour were all acknowledged by Committee. Chairman concluded by presenting Professor Heal with some gifts as a token of appreciation on behalf of all Committee members.
- 1.5 Professor Heal thanked Committee for the kind gifts and acknowledged that he had enjoyed his time on Committee, finding it both interesting and challenging.

Update on June 2003 Committee meeting

- 1.6 Chairman provided a brief update on arrangements for the June 2003 Committee meeting which is to be hosted by the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS), Northern Ireland and will take place from 17 – 19 June 2003, anticipating a lunchtime finish on the third day. June Swift has provisionally arranged accommodation and the Support Unit is currently working on the detail of the itinerary. A note regarding accommodation and flight options will be sent to members shortly.
- 1.7 An evening event is planned for 17 June 2003 and the field visit the following day will include various earth heritage sites, exploring different earth science themes. Chairman thanked EHS for their support in arranging the Committee visit. The timing of this visit is apt, providing a useful strategic opportunity considering the planned international earth science conference in Dorset in autumn 2004.
- 1.8 Dr Faulkner noted that he was looking forward to welcoming Committee to Northern Ireland. In planning the trip there had been a temptation to be overambitious in considering sites to visit but, to be practical, EHS have chosen a number of specific sites that should allow discussion around a wide number of issues. The chosen hotel is also on the doorstep of Roe Valley Country Park which will provide another interesting location from a nature conservation point of view.

Meeting with Minister

- 1.9 Committee noted that Chairman and Mr Steer had recently met with the Minister, Elliot Morley, who seemed well disposed to the JNCC. There were particular congratulations from both sides on CITES work, and Chairman noted that the Minister had displayed particular interest in certain other aspects of JNCC's work. Chairman recognised that there is probably still a need to explain more fully JNCC's relationship with the country agencies. Opportunities such as the planned international earth science and waterbird conferences in 2004 were recognised by both sides as extremely valuable and other items mentioned included the Global Biodiversity Information Forum (GBIF), and the strong volunteer base that supports data collection for surveillance purposes. Chairman and Mr Steer congratulated the Minister on Defra's science strategy (which will be launched publicly on 7 April 2003) and acknowledged opportunities linked to this. Areas of concern discussed at the meeting included the need for progress on FMPR and agreed funding arrangements and the issue of co-ordinating government requirements for JNCC work across departments. The Minister agreed to take up these issues and investigate further the opportunities that had been discussed.

2. Amendments to the minutes (JNCC 03 P02)

- 2.1 The amendments to the minutes were approved and Committee agreed that, in future, unnecessary minor amendments should be avoided.

3. **Matters arising (JNCC 03 P05) – *this item is included as a confidential addendum to the minutes***

4. **Declaration of interests**

4.1 Chairman noted that a register of members' interests was being maintained and kept up to date and that members, therefore, only need acknowledge interests that were of particular relevance to agenda items.

4.2 In respect of agenda item 3, Dr Moser noted that he was a member of the British Trust of Ornithology.

5. **JNCC Corporate Plan for 2003-06 (JNCC 03 P04)**

5.1 Mr Steer provided a brief introduction to this paper, advising that formal confirmation of grant in aid had still not been received. An indicative figure of £5.526 million had been given by Defra. This was insufficient to deliver the corporate plan as previously considered and it would be necessary to remove projects rather than anticipate in year funding as had been the case in the current year.

5.2 Mr Yeo provided a more detailed presentation outlining JNCC's funding situation. Mr Yeo firstly considered the historical context of JNCC's grant in aid from 1991, highlighting that if JNCC's budget was judged in real terms (i.e. including the impact of inflation) the indicative budget for 2003/04 is not markedly different from that in 1991. Funding uncertainties during 2002/03 had caused problems in planning work and had led to some targets not being achieved in full. There were a number of additional burdens and new priorities for 2003/04, including pay progression and FMPR costs. In addition, the presentation also indicated which areas of work had currently been excluded from the corporate plan for 2003/04.

5.3 Mr Steer apologised to Committee for the small amounts of money being discussed but emphasised that the uncertainty surrounding funding was placing undue pressure on staff and was certainly not the most efficient way of working as it led to disruption throughout the year. Mr Steer acknowledged that the new process for agreeing funding, which had been supported by all, had not worked well in practice, which was worrying as this was the first year of its implementation. Further work was necessary with Defra colleagues to ensure the process worked effectively in future years.

5.4 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. CCW questioned whether there was any carry over capability for funds which had not been spent by the close of the financial year. Committee noted that Treasury had removed end of year flexibility for Defra (over a two-year period up to 2003) who in turn had passed this on to their NDPBs.

- ii. SNH noted that the process established for agreeing JNCC funding arrangements had not been utilised and no indicative figures for 2004/05 and 2005/06 had been given. SNH remarked that Defra had also given an undertaking to look at a separate funding stream for areas of JNCC work that were directly related to government, such as CITES. SNH supported the corporate plan subject to the above points.
- iii. Committee noted that the new process for agreeing JNCC funding had been raised with the Minister. It would be important to ensure that the mechanisms of communication between Defra and the devolved administrations were clarified. Although there had been correspondence, no face to face meetings on this issue had occurred. It was recognised that Defra's financial position was difficult but this was not the case for the Scottish Executive and the National Assembly for Wales. However, because the FMPR funding procedures had not been implemented (and as a result of the agreed funding formula) JNCC's budget was constrained by the lowest common denominator each time. This was highly unsatisfactory.
- iv. With reference to elements of the corporate plan that were listed as being excluded, Professor Heal noted, in particular, work on Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF). At a recent meeting, two Ministers, including Mr Meacher, had highlighted the importance of links with the Arctic and urged their support of work in this area.
- v. Mr Moser noted that the presentation had concentrated on grant in aid but that there were other sources of income which the JNCC might consider. It would be useful to highlight projects that had been developed using external funding and had subsequently been absorbed into JNCC's core programme, without being accompanied by further external funding. Work to support areas such as CITES and the Overseas Territories could be partly funded by other government departments such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Mr Steer noted that this was indeed a possibility, but that until better co-ordination existed between government departments regarding JNCC's work, it would be difficult to secure significant funding from government departments other than Defra.
- vi. Committee expressed their concern that some aspects of the common standards monitoring (CSM) work were excluded from the corporate plan and urged that this area be reconsidered.
- vii. Mr Yeo advised Committee that Defra had made some comments about areas that were not included in the plan for 2003/04 such as the winter mammal monitoring project. Defra had launched this as

a pilot project and would like JNCC to co-ordinate the work from November 2003. However, continuing the programme was likely to cost £50k per annum, which Defra were unable to provide. Defra had not suggested other areas of work that could be excluded instead.

- viii. Dr Brown commented that the corporate plan was clearly laid out and easy to read but that some of the targets were still unclear and it would be useful to identify some high-level targets. Mr Yeo noted that about 20 targets had been identified as key and acknowledged that some targets were similar to actions because it had proved difficult to quantify some aspects of JNCC's work, in particular, advice to government and others. The intention is to measure outputs and outcomes where possible, while recognising that JNCC is only a part contributor to most nature conservation outcomes. Improved performance measurement techniques would be introduced during 2003/04 and the Support Unit would welcome any suggestions Committee may have on this topic.

- 5.5 **Committee approved the Corporate Plan subject to the points raised above and agreed that further consideration should be given to CAFF and CSM work. Committee urged Defra to implement the agreed funding arrangements and agreed that problems with end of year flexibility and funding arrangements should be raised with Government. In addition, Committee requested that alternative sources of funding be explored in addition to grant in aid with regard to certain areas of work.**

6. **FMPR – update on progress (JNCC 03 P03)**
FMPR – Project Initiation Document (JNCC 03 N02)

- 6.1 Mr Steer introduced these papers by highlighting that they contained some important decisions for Committee. The FMPR sub-group of Committee had met and terms of reference for this group were presented to Committee for agreement. In addition, a list of powers that JNCC would require (which highlighted changes required through the Regulatory Reform Act (RRA)) were included. Further risk analysis of the implementation project had indicated that it would be preferable to change the start date of the new organisation to April 2005 and Committee was being asked to consider this.
- 6.2 Two elements had indicated that an April 2004 date may be unachievable – the RRA process was likely to take from 18 to 24 months to pass through Parliament, and negotiation and harmonisation of staff terms and conditions was also likely to take longer than at first expected. The latest country agency Resource Directors' meeting had seen very productive discussions about staffing issues but there was an acknowledgement that an April 2004 start date would be very tight. A mid-year start date had been considered but the cost/benefit analysis of setting up interim systems indicated that it would not be worthwhile.
- 6.3 The Project Initiation Document was included as information for Committee.

The FMPR sub-group would act as the project board reviewing the project timetable and resources.

6.4 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. Committee requested confirmation of the membership of the FMPR sub-group, as follows;
 - Mrs Bryan (Chair)
 - Dr Markland
 - Mr Lloyd-Jones
 - Sir Martin Doughty
 - Dr Faulkner
 - Professor Doyle (who would join from April 2003)The FMPR sub-group is supported by the following members of the Support Unit.
 - Mr Steer
 - Mr Little
 - Mr Yeo
- ii. Committee recognised that amendments requiring primary legislation were still being sought as certain FMPR recommendations would only be achievable via this route. Defra still have this on their agenda and it is a standing item at meetings with Defra. A window for primary legislation is unlikely to become available for at least two years.
- iii. SNH noted that they were happy with the terms of reference but cautioned that the remits of the different groups involved in the process should not overlap too much.
- iv. On the specific list of powers, number 4 should more correctly refer to the common citizenship agreement as opposed to rights. Number 12 still required confirmation from Defra lawyers – the Support Unit was awaiting a decision from Committee on the list of powers before pressing Defra to consider them in more detail. Number 21 relating to the accounting officer status of the Managing Director of JNCC would need to be clarified.
- v. Although still to be confirmed, Committee noted that the financial memorandum, management statement and other governance documents would probably require the agreement of the country agencies, devolved administrations and Defra. The FMPR recommendations included an agreement that accountability lines should be simplified.
- vi. It was noted that the power listed in 1(a) relating to partnerships was a general statement about the mechanisms through which JNCC works. It had been included to ensure that the legislation would not cause any problems.

- vii. Mr Steer advised that an open meeting had been held with staff in advance of the Committee meeting to advise staff of the recommendation to change the start date of the new organisation to April 2005. He acknowledged the importance of keeping staff up to date on FMPR issues and had made a commitment to staff at the beginning of the process that this would be the case. Mr Steer had emphasised to staff that the uncertainties surrounding the FMPR process had not impacted unduly on the delivery of work and that the profile of the JNCC continued to grow. Staff were understandably fatigued by the process but took it seriously and were keen to be reassured of Committee's commitment to the new organisation. The Trade Unions will be canvassing staff opinion but it is likely that views will become more apparent as the process starts to look at the more detailed elements relating to staff.
- viii. Committee noted that achievement of the RRA changes was essentially a Westminster process but that Defra had undertaken to send all relevant documentation to Scottish Executive lawyers for consideration.
- ix. Professor Heal emphasised the importance of recognising what had already been achieved through the FMPR process and that this should be highlighted alongside the work that was still required.
- x. Committee noted that the salary of the project leader had only been included for 2003/04 and it was agreed that this should be reviewed as it was likely, with the change of start date, that the project leader would be required for a longer time period.

6.5 Committee agreed the terms of reference of the FMPR sub-group and the list of powers, subject to the points raised above. The revised start date of April 2005 was approved. Committee agreed that a list of achievements should be drawn up and the project leader costs for 2004/05 onwards should be considered. Committee noted the Project Initiation Document.

7. Marine Natura 2000 (JNCC 03 P01)

- 7.1 Dr Vincent introduced the paper by acknowledging that Committee had previously expressed concern about being insufficiently involved in the work on marine Natura in the offshore environment. As a consequence, a process had been put in place to ensure that Committee was kept fully informed of progress on this work and which would enable the Committee to take the necessary decisions after full and due consideration.
- 7.2 Dr Vincent highlighted four key points of the paper in his introduction. The first related to process. A process of informal consultation had been instituted with nearly 200 stakeholders in order to benefit from their expertise and to gauge opinion. Liaison with the EC Habitats Committee had been recently very significantly improved as a result of the establishment

by the Committee of a marine sub-group. A process gap which still needed to be addressed was liaison with the UK Natura Steering Group, and Dr Vincent had recently written to Martin Capstick at Defra with a view to remedying this. Secondly, the method of defining the seaward boundaries of the seabird breeding colony SPAs, and of offshore habitat SACs, had received widespread support from consultees, and little amendment had been required, although it was recognised that the SPA guidance related, to date, only to four species. Thirdly, the present paper described a proposed methodology for applying the Habitats Directive site selection criteria and principles to offshore areas falling within the relevant Annex 1 habitat types. If this methodology were adopted the paper indicates those sites (in Group 1) which would be likely to be selected, and those sites (in Group 2) which would merit further consideration. It was proposed to carry out further consultation on this process. Fourthly, Dr Vincent asked Committee to discuss the level of biological information needed to select offshore habitat SACs. If detailed biological information were needed, then a further survey would be required for many of the sites in the Group 2 category, and this would have significant cost and/or timescale implications. There was a strong scientific argument, however, that much survey was not required as the geo-physical character of sites would largely determine its biological content. This might be an issue for the marine sub-group of the EC Habitats Committee to discuss.

7.3 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. Professor Pentreath noted that the marine project group, set up at the request of Committee, and which he chairs, has met twice. It is important to consider how much detail Committee requires on this issue – possibly just the issues of contention? The project group itself discusses the range of technical issues and develops a consensus view having regard to the informal consultation process with stakeholders. Also, while the project group has discussed mainly marine Natura matters it is now also looking at these within the development of an overall marine conservation strategy.
- ii. SNH commented that there is a need to engage with the UK Natura Steering Group and are keen that a UK supported view be established before it is presented to the EC Habitats Committee. SNH would be anxious about any informal stakeholder discussions taking place before the UK Natura Group had had a chance to consider issues. With regard to marine SPAs, SNH were happy to agree the guidance but noted that other bird issues should not be forgotten. Similarly, SNH supported the methodology proposed for marine SACs. They commented that the methodology used to define the boundary for Camarthen Bay should not be set in stone and that other options should be considered before a methodology was finally recommended.
- iii. Professor Heal noted that much of the information was very site oriented and that in the marine environment it is particularly

important to consider wide issues such as marine dynamics.

- iv. With regard to the development of different guidelines for the definition of boundaries for SACs and SPAs, Dr Vincent advised that the consistency lay in adopting a practical, sensible and proportionate approach to achieving essential safeguard of the designated feature. As for terrestrial SPAs and SACs, the key to site boundary definition lay in what was required to do the job. For SPAs, seaward site boundaries are best defined on the basis of the degree of seabird usage, this is quite sufficient. For offshore habitat SACs, the critical issue is ensuring the practical conservation of the designated feature.
- v. Committee noted that gannets were treated differently to the other seabirds as surveys have indicated that gannets use the first 2km outwards from shore whereas the other seabirds considered primarily use the first 1km.
- vi. It was acknowledged that some areas which may be recommended as SACs may extend beyond UK territory into that of another member state on the High Seas and, therefore, the international dimension of designations should also be considered.
- vii. In relation to the level of biological information required to select offshore SACs, Committee noted that current estimates indicated that it could cost, on average, between £100k and £150k to obtain significant further information on a site not previously surveyed. Committee agreed that it was difficult to define exactly the level of biological information that should be collated but it would be sensible to work on the premise that there should be enough information to justify a designation. There is likely to be scope for adopting a modelling approach based on real data. Committee noted too that it is important to consider how a designated site will be managed - relatively little guidance currently exists for sites in the offshore marine environment.

7.4 Committee agreed the guidance for defining seaward boundaries of seabird colony SPAs and habitat SACs away from the coast as its provisional guidance that could be used as the need arose prior to the adoption of full guidance on marine Natura issues. Committee approved the methodology described in the paper for the selection of offshore habitat SACs for the purpose of informal consultation, subject to the points raised above, and noted that the group 1 sites listed in the paper were given as examples. With regard to the issue of biological information needed to select offshore habitat SACs, Committee agreed that there should be enough information to justify a designation. Dr Vincent will produce a brief paper containing some guidance and criteria on this issue.

8. Terms of reference for the strategy sub-group (JNCC 03 D05)

- 8.1 The Chairman introduced this paper following the strategy sub-group meeting on 5 March 2003, advising that there had been excellent discussions at the meeting and that a good start had been made. The sub-group had formulated some terms of reference for the Committee to consider.
- 8.2 In discussion the following points were raised:
- i. The terms of reference refer to a vision for nature conservation and Committee discussed whether this vision should allude to underlying social and economic factors. Committee noted that the strategy sub-group had considered these factors in their discussions but decided to concentrate on the nature conservation remit. It was agreed by all that this was the right approach. It was suggested that a form of words be proposed to indicate that the vision took account of social and economic factors. Adding the word 'sustainable' before 'European and global context' in point 1(i) of the terms of reference was deemed suitable.
 - ii. Committee recognised that a UK vision for nature conservation would be wider than just the JNCC and one of the roles of the sub-group would be to decide where JNCC fits into the overall vision. Equally a UK vision should be considered in a wider global and European context, as highlighted by the sub-group in the suggested terms of reference.
 - iii. The possibility of engaging with other partners to develop the vision was raised and the Chairman advised that this would be considered once the sub-group had progressed their own discussions. Indeed, Professor Ingram commented that strategic planning is an ongoing process and once a vision has been reached, it would be beneficial to test it for robustness against experts in the field, including ethicists and economists as well as scientists.
 - iv. With regard to the actions the JNCC will take to develop the strategy, it was suggested that point 2(iii) be amended to read 'assist the Support Unit and others to develop...' as the country agencies may be able to play a part. Chairman noted that the involvement and support of the country agencies would be welcomed and that it was also the intention to involve staff from the Support Unit in the process.
 - v. SNH suggested that it may be useful to look at the existing visions of the country agencies to promote consistency and would like their board to sign up to the JNCC strategy. Committee agreed that it would be constructive for the country agency councils/boards to meet to discuss areas such as JNCC's strategy and FMPR implementation. Chairman supported this, reminding Committee that all four agencies would need to be involved.

8.3 Committee agreed the aims and approach of the sub-group as reflected in the terms of reference, subject to the points raised above. Committee recognised that it would be important to obtain the ownership and support of staff, country agencies and other partners for the strategy.

9. The future role of JNCC in Biological Surveillance and Monitoring (JNCC 03 D03)

9.1 Dr Vincent introduced this paper, which followed a presentation on the same topic the evening before – slides from the presentation were tabled. Dr Vincent advised that JNCC are implementing the framework considered by the Committee 3 years ago, though progress had been slower than anticipated because of resource constraints. It is hoped to make further progress on the mammals, plants and habitats elements of the work programme. It is also anticipated that JNCC's future role will be one of co-ordination, acting as a body which disseminates the outcomes of work in this area.

9.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. Dr Moser thanked Mr Rose and Dr McLean from the Support Unit for the presentation the previous evening and noted that it is important for Committee to view the vision at the right level. The Support Unit will continue to underpin this by looking at what is needed from the vision and JNCC's role in its delivery. A vision for surveillance and monitoring should form an integral part of the overall JNCC strategy being considered by the Committee sub-group. The cost-effectiveness of the vision should also be considered - it is important to develop a programme that is fit for purpose, as surveillance and monitoring work can be extremely expensive.
- ii. Committee agreed that it would be essential to develop a project plan that outlined mechanisms for delivery of the vision and the appropriate resources required, as this would influence how funds from the country agencies are directed. Modelling was suggested as a cost-effective means of generating predictions from diverse data. Much surveillance and monitoring work has been conducted in the UK and there is a need now to reflect on what products have been produced and how these might be made more policy relevant. The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) was cited as an invaluable resource for integrating data from surveillance and monitoring so it can be easily analysed and contribute to the development of models.
- iii. Committee recognised the huge contribution offered by volunteers to monitoring and surveillance work and noted a particular increase in volunteers in the marine environment.

9.3 Committee agreed that the framework set out in the paper should be further developed during 2003, subject to the points raised above. Committee recognised that there was a need to build upon ongoing work

to consider what conclusions can be reached and to adopt modelling approaches within the analysis techniques used. The evolution of a project plan was required, which would ensure appropriate discussion with stakeholders, and place an emphasis on cost-effectiveness, policy relevance and making full use of existing surveillance and monitoring schemes. Committee asked for the further work by the Support Unit in this area to be made available to the strategy sub-group. Committee also recognised the important role of volunteers and the NBN in the work of surveillance and monitoring.

10. Outcomes of the 8th Ramsar Conference, November 2002 (JNCC 03 D02)

10.1 Dr Vincent introduced this paper which summarised the outcomes of the 8th Ramsar Conference of the Parties and the likely implications for the UK. Defra have been very enthusiastic about the outcomes and there is now a need to co-ordinate this eagerness and deliver benefits for nature conservation.

10.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. Committee agreed that the main benefits the Ramsar Convention will deliver will be to encourage wise use of wetlands, although it was recognised that the JNCC would not have direct involvement in Ramsar's work on River Basin Management Plans.
- ii. Miss Moore noted that the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) had encouraged a broader view which encapsulated socio-economic values and this was the approach being adopted for Ramsar in the UK. Ramsar encouraged a holistic approach to wetland conservation which extended beyond nature conservation sites.
- iii. Professor Heal noted his surprise to see such strong references to the marine environment and the ecosystem approach reflected in the conclusions of the conference, but this was welcomed.
- iv. Dr Moser mentioned that he was pleased to see that the UK had been presented with the 'Gold Duck' award and congratulated the Support Unit on the substantial and effective support given to Government on the Ramsar Convention.
- v. SNH noted that Scottish legislation did not make explicit provision for Ramsar implementation and EC sites would, therefore, take priority in Scotland. Committee noted that the UK already has 10% of all Ramsar sites and the addition of new sites would, therefore, need to be considered alongside other priorities.

10.3 Committee supported adoption of the wider approach to 'wise use of wetlands' and recognised the excellent work of the Support Unit in assisting Government. Committee also recommended a cautious

approach to increasing the UK site list recognising that 10% of all Ramsar sites occurred in the UK.

11. JNCC marine priorities 2003/04 to 2005/06 (JNCC 03 D01)

11.1 Dr Vincent introduced this paper which summarised work in progress on developing marine priorities and advised that the intention is to develop this work further in the light of ongoing marine strategy development in the UK and Europe, and also of JNCC's own strategy.

11.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. English Nature commented that they were generally in support of the paper and the priorities outlined but there may be a need to revisit some areas in light of the discussions on marine Natura 2000. It is important that JNCC and the country agencies liaise closely over the 12 nautical mile boundary and also on the ecosystem approach. English Nature commented that it would be useful if the diagram on page 4 of the paper, demonstrating the overall context and shape of JNCC's marine work, could include a link to external factors such as the country agencies and the marine stewardship programme. As regards the Annex on stakeholders, they suggested adding the World Wildlife Fund and aggregate industries. Dr Vincent noted that the list of stakeholders was greater than shown; only a sample had been included in the paper.
- ii. Committee generally agreed with the comments made by English Nature and also noted that more attention is now being placed on offshore renewables as a result of the energy white paper. It was recognised that whilst the renewables industry should be supported, there is a need to be consistent in the nature conservation approach. With regard to offshore renewables, Mr Steer advised that the Support Unit is working with the Department of Trade and Industry on licensing and considering the effect the industry is having on the seabed. This close co-operation will continue to improve as relationships are developed. It is useful to call upon the country agencies for assistance in certain areas, at which times Mr Steer would encourage country agency representatives to consider issues at the UK, as opposed to local, level.
- iii. Committee agreed that marine priorities should be linked to the overall strategy being developed for JNCC. It might be more useful to consider the marine priorities paper in terms of a work plan as it could be destructive to consider individual issues, such as offshore renewables, in isolation from everything else.

11.3 **Committee agreed that the paper provided a broad understanding of marine priorities as they currently stand and recognised that it would be important to consider the strategies of other organisations alongside this. In terms of work on offshore renewables, more groundwork is**

needed to determine principles and resources required. Committee noted that the paper may contain too many priorities but felt that circumstances and reality will shape this over time.

12. Forward programme for Committee (JNCC 03 D04)

12.1 Chairman introduced the paper advising that the intention was to encourage Committee to consider what papers should be proposed in future. The forward programme is not intended to provide a rigid timetable of agenda items but to provide a flexible framework into which papers can be added, substituted or deleted.

12.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

i. Miss Bigger advised that, in future, circulation of Committee agendas in advance of the meeting would contain details regarding the scope/content of papers and encouraged Committee to respond with any comments at this early stage to ensure that papers presented addresses members' expectations.

ii. Mr Steer commented that additional items for the forward programme had already been identified and would be added. He encouraged Committee to consider 'blue sky' items that should be built into the forward programme.

iii. With reference to 'blue sky' items, Professor Ingram noted that it would be useful for Committee to have some scope for philosophical discussions, perhaps stemming from a presentation by a member on a particular topic. Work on strategic development should help to inform this area.

12.3 Committee approved the forward programme and agreed to consider future items that could be added. Committee agreed that it may be constructive to consider some papers that are presented to country agency boards/councils. In addition, Committee requested that country agency board/council agendas and minutes be circulated to JNCC members and that independent members attend some country agency meetings.

13. Third staff satisfaction survey (JNCC 03 N01)

13.1 This paper summarised the results of the third JNCC staff satisfaction survey, which was conducted in the Support Unit in November 2002. It described some of the measures that have been initiated to address issues raised in the survey, and contained an outline action plan.

13.2 In discussion the following point was raised:

i. Committee commented that it was a very useful paper and noted that some of the issues raised would be resolved through the FMPR

implementation process.

13.3 Committee noted the paper.

14. EC Habitats Directive: update of progress on the UK list of Special Areas of Conservation (JNCC 03 N03)

14.1 Mr Jones provided a brief introduction to the paper, advising that the European Commission would be proposing a list of SACs in April 2003. Bi-lateral meetings are planned in July 2003 and member states will then have time to consider the list. The Commission hope to have a confirmed list of SACs in December 2003 or January 2004. Ratification may take slightly longer in Germany due to the length of their political process.

14.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. Committee noted that the list of cSACs as at the end April will be considered for listing as sites of community importance. Those habitats and species not sufficiently represented in the network will be marked as 'reserved' and will be considered subsequently.
- ii. SNH noted that Scotland will not be able to meet the timetable but is taking action to complete consultations as soon as possible.

14.3 Committee noted the paper.

15. Any other business

15.1 No other business was noted.