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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

JNCC STRATEGY: TAKING FORWARD THE STRATEGIC VISION OBJECTIVE

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the strategy development process, the Committee, in conjunction with the country agencies, developed a joint vision for wildlife and natural features. The vision sets out the long-term aspirations of the JNCC and its member bodies for wildlife and natural features. It contains high-level objectives and outcomes that are set within the context of sustainable development. The vision is intended to provide inspiration and direction for the work of the JNCC and its member bodies, and to influence the views and activities of other stakeholders in the environment.
- 1.2 The vision provides a good basis on which to build. However, at the moment, it is in too general a form to provide practical guidance for the JNCC in the further development of its programmes, or for Government and other relevant organisations in the further development of theirs. Accordingly, a key objective in the JNCC's strategy is to develop and renew the vision.
- 1.3 The programme to deliver this part of the strategy is being developed and is outlined in the JNCC's corporate plan for 2005-08. This paper sets out initial thinking on the scope of the programme and a process to develop it further.

2. Proposed components of the vision programme

Framework for nature conservation as a basis for strategic advice.

- 2.1 Much nature conservation work has been undertaken in the UK by a wide range of organisations, including the UK Government, devolved administrations, statutory agencies, local authorities and non-governmental organisations. This has resulted in a wide range of commitments to nature conservation targets, strategies and other delivery mechanisms and approaches; for instance international obligations, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and country biodiversity strategies. Work on new areas, for instance implementation of the ecosystem approach and the UK marine strategy, adds to this picture.
- 2.2 The proposed approach is to build on these foundations to develop the vision into a comprehensive and coherent framework of targets, strategies and other measures for nature conservation. This would provide the basis upon which to formulate advice on strategic priorities for nature conservation in the UK, and

on possible delivery mechanisms to achieve these priorities. It would also guide the identification of strategic priorities for the JNCC and the country agencies.

- 2.3 Work within the programme would also be concerned with maintaining this framework. This would involve horizon scanning and considering at an early stage the application and relevance to nature conservation of upcoming 'big ideas', and bringing together outputs from each of the other JNCC programmes, and information and experience from outside the JNCC, to update and amend the framework as necessary. The vision statement itself will need to be revised and updated periodically (probably quinquennially).

Ways of working

- 2.4 It is envisaged that the Joint Committee will play a prominent role in delivering this programme in conjunction with the boards and councils of the country agencies, with UK Government departments and devolved administrations, and with the wider nature conservation community. The programme will, therefore, need to develop ways of working within Committee and between Committee and its major stakeholders.

Communications strategy

- 2.5 Finally, a key element of the strategic objective is to "champion" the vision, in partnership with others, to the wide range of stakeholders, including public and private sector bodies, non-governmental organisations and society at large, whose contributions are all necessary in its delivery. The programme will, therefore, also need to contain a strand concerned with the development of a communications strategy for the information and advice arising from the framework of targets, strategies and other measures described above. This might include considering the importance of raising public awareness in relation to biodiversity, geodiversity, the framework and related issues.

3. The framework concept

- 3.1 Whilst this paper outlines the Support Unit's broad thinking on the concept of a framework, the overall shape and nature of that framework remains to be fully developed. The important aspects of such a framework are that it should:
- i. enable biodiversity and geodiversity obligations and aspirations to be met;
 - ii. sit within the context of sustainable development and have regard to society's social and economic needs;
 - iii. enable the Joint Committee to provide:
 - a. advice to Government and others on strategic priorities (and targets) for nature conservation in the UK (and the UK's contribution to international nature conservation);

- b. advice to Government and others on delivery mechanisms to achieve these priorities;
 - c. guidance to the JNCC and the country agencies on strategic priorities for their work.
- 3.2 Development of the framework could begin by drawing together existing information. This might include:
 - i. existing international and national obligations relating to nature conservation, e.g. contained in multilateral environmental agreements, EU directives, UK BAP and Government PSA targets;
 - ii. existing delivery mechanisms (e.g. UK BAP) and any related measures of effectiveness;
 - iii. any existing targets and measures relating to socio-economic objectives and activities which relate to nature conservation;
 - iv. any existing definitions, standards and measures for nature conservation outcomes, e.g. favourable conservation status.
- 3.3 The challenge would then be to build on this information to develop a coherent framework that is effective in delivering the outputs described in paragraph 3.1. Possible activities will be:
 - i. determining what adjustments, if any, would be needed to existing international and national objectives to create a coherent framework;
 - ii. identifying any major gaps in delivery mechanisms or policies or in definitions, standards and measures;
 - iii. developing some of the concepts underpinning the objectives and outcomes in the vision, for instance assessment of the links between the environment and socio-economic concerns and evaluating the role of protected areas in biodiversity and geodiversity conservation;
 - iv. identifying, more clearly than at present, the responsibilities for delivering the various components of the framework;
 - v. commissioning work from the JNCC to fill gaps or providing advice to others on work requirements;
 - vi. commissioning information on current and forecast status against targets contained in the framework.

4. Process for developing the framework concept

- 4.1 Only an outline of the possible content of the framework concept is given in this paper. This is because it is considered very important that the Joint Committee itself leads the development of the framework and that other key stakeholders, particularly the country agencies and Government, are fully engaged in the process also. It is important for the Committee not only to be involved fully in the development of the framework, but in the development of the process for engaging other key stakeholders. In the short term, it is proposed that the process be taken forward by a relatively concentrated series of meetings of a sub-group of the Committee with support from JNCC staff to:
- i. consider how Government, the country agency boards/ councils and other stakeholders should be involved in the development of the framework;
 - ii. define and elaborate the main components of the framework, and identify the work needed to develop it to substantive completion within a 2 year time-frame;
 - iii. develop a process for identifying roles and responsibilities within the framework, and of ways and means of taking it forward through JNCC work programmes;
 - iv. formulate a communications strategy.