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**JNCC 05 M03
September 2005**

JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE, HELD ON THURSDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2005 AT
JNCC, MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY**

Present:

Dr Andrews
Dr Blakiston Houston
Dr B Brown
Mr Darby (Chairman)
Professor Doyle
Professor Ingram
Mr Lloyd Jones(items 11-14)
Dr Moser
Professor Sprent

In attendance:

Ms Fowler
Professor Galbraith
Mrs Quince
Mr Steer
Mr Thomas
Dr Vincent
Mr Yeo

Contents:

1. Chairman's opening remarks
2. Declaration of interests
3. Amendments to the minutes of the sixty-seventh meeting (**JNCC 05 P09**)
4. Matters arising

Decision Papers

5. Marine Natura 2000 (**JNCC 05 P10**)
6. Fifth Quinquennial Review of Schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981 (**JNCC 05 P11**)
7. Position statement on avian influenza (**JNCC 05 P13**)

Discussion Papers

8. The Ramsar Convention's Ninth Conference of the Parties (**JNCC 05 D09**)

9. Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (**JNCC 05 D11**)
10. Overview of JNCC priorities for policy and advocacy (**JNCC 05 D10**)

Information Papers

11. Framework for UK Nature Conservation – progress report (**JNCC 05 N02**)
12. Update to the Joint Committee on conservation-related marine initiatives in the UK, Europe and North-East Atlantic (**JNCC 05 N03**)
13. Any other business

Closed Session

14. Naming the support company

1. **Chairman's opening remarks**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Dr Andy Brown, Rev Dr Burgess, Sir Martin Doughty, Dr Markland, Dr Meharg, Professor Pentreath, and Dr Jardine.
- 1.2 Chairman welcomed Dr Bob Brown to his first meeting.
- 1.3 Chairman informed members that he had received a letter of resignation from Dr Andrews. This was her last meeting, and on behalf of Committee Chairman thanked Dr Andrews for her valuable contribution to the work of the JNCC.

2. **Declaration of interests**

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were received.

3. **Amendments to the minutes of the sixty-seventh meeting (JNCC 05 P09)**

- 3.1 Committee noted the one amendment to the minutes contained in the paper.
- 3.2 Committee approved the minutes subject to the amendment.

4. **Matters arising**

- 4.1 Committee were informed that a discussion on finding a new name for the company would take place in the closed session.

- 4.2 Committee discussed two further items from the minutes of the sixty-seventh meeting:
- i. Item 6.3. Committee were informed that a paper on the JNCC's future work on climate change would be presented at the December meeting;
 - ii. Item 9. Committee were informed that the intention was that minutes from the vision and process working groups' meetings would be circulated to all Committee members. Mr Steer would arrange for the minutes of these groups to be circulated.

5. Marine Natura 2000 (JNCC 05 P10)

- 5.1 Dr Vincent introduced the paper, explaining that it continues the Joint Committee's consideration of work undertaken to complete the marine Natura 2000 site series in relation to offshore Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and was in three parts.
- i. The first part related to interim conservation objectives and management considerations for four areas already approved by the Joint Committee for submission to Government as possible SACs. Committee were reminded that there is no statutory obligation on JNCC to provide advice of this nature (as there is on the country agencies for inshore sites) because the offshore (Natura 2000) Regulations are not yet in place although JNCC is required to give advice under the offshore energy Regulations. However, Government has requested interim advice, pending these Regulations.
 - ii. The second part related to three further possible SACs for submission to Government. These sites have been selected in accordance with the methodology previously adopted by the Committee that indicates presence of features based on available data, rather than a full ecological context which would give the extent of the features across UK waters.
 - iii. Thirdly, the paper summarised the work carried out to identify possible SACs for bottlenose dolphins in the offshore area. Committee were informed that no offshore areas have been identified as being suitable for selection as SACs for this species, although, they are listed as an incidental feature for two sites already submitted by JNCC.
- 5.2 Committee were invited to approve advice to Government on these issues.
- 5.3 In discussion, the following points were raised in relation to the draft conservation objectives and management actions:
- i. it was queried whether aggregate dredging should not be listed as a possible cause of damage to sites;

- ii. English Nature requested a number of caveats and other minor changes to the guidance;
- iii. on the Dogger Bank, discussions on future management may be required with the Dutch and German authorities if a site falling within the territories of all three countries is established;
- iv. good communications between JNCC and the country agencies where proposals could have implications for them was critical;
- v. there were problems in obtaining fishing activity information;
- vi. climate change affects the ability to manage sites in perpetuity, and a mini appraisal of the sensitivity of the site to climate change over time would be helpful.

5.4 It was noted that the names of the banks should be included on the map on page 42 as they were referred to in the justification text.

5.5 Committee approved:

- i. the draft conservation objectives and management actions for Haig Fras, Wyville Thomson Ridge, Dogger Bank and Scanner Pockmark, subject to the comments noted above. Committee authorised the Chairman to advise Defra accordingly;**
- ii. the three new areas (North Norfolk Sandbanks, Stanton Banks and Braemar Pockmarks) to be recommended to Government as suitable for selection as SACs;**
- iii. a mini appraisal of the sensitivity of sites to climate changes over time to be included in the management plans;**
- iv. the names of the banks to be included on the map on page 42;**
- v. the advice that no offshore SACs for bottlenose dolphin will be recommended to Defra;**
- vi. Dr Vincent and Professor Galbraith to engage in a mechanism of communication to inform debate and engage other EU countries.**

6. **Fifth Quinquennial Review of Schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981 (JNCC 05 P11)**

6.1 Dr Vincent introduced the paper and explained that the Joint Committee's recommendations following the 4th Quinquennial Review were submitted to Government in September 2002. After a lengthy delay, Defra consulted on the recommendations in early 2005, and it is hoped that Departmental officials will put the case for changes to the Schedules to the Secretary of State later this year. Dr Vincent explained it is now time to start work on the 5th Quinquennial Review which is due to be completed by the end of 2006, in accordance with the duty placed upon JNCC by statute. This duty only applies to Great Britain, so Northern Ireland is not affected. Committee were asked to agree the process proposed, and consider how it wishes to be involved in the process.

6.2 In discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. the fifth Quinquennial Review should be a high-quality review, focussed on the species most likely to benefit from protection;
- ii. the Review will take place in parallel with the review of priority habitats and species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP);
- iii. previous reviews had provided successful spin offs into other areas e.g. the UK BAP process built on work undertaken as a direct result of the first Quinquennial Review;
- iv. staff should be consulted as to whether a group selected from Committee members would be useful in assisting them with the Review.

6.3 **Committee:**

- i. **agreed that the Chairman should write to Defra to accelerate the conclusion of the fourth Quinquennial Review;**
- ii. **approved the process outlined in the paper in relation to the fifth Quinquennial Review. Progress on the review would be posted on the website. It was proposed Committee discusses the review again in 12 months time.**

7. Position statement on avian influenza (JNCC 05 P13)

7.1 Dr Vincent explained that the paper set out a draft interagency position statement on Avian Influenza. The working document had been used in discussions with Government and others prior to its formal consideration by Committee. Dr Vincent drew Committee's attention to matters which had developed over the last two weeks:

- i. the European Commission is not co-ordinating surveillance plans for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in wild birds across Europe.

Each Member State is developing its own surveillance programme according to broad guidelines;

- ii. Defra has now developed a surveillance plan for HPAI in wild birds and submitted this to the European Commission.

7.2 Committee were invited to consider and approve the position statement.

7.3 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. the inter-agency ornithology group could usefully explore the risk issues in greater detail;
- ii. consideration should be given to consultation with other bodies outside the nature conservation field, e.g. the State Veterinary Service, and the animal welfare section of Defra, to examine whether modelling techniques could be extended to include risks to wildlife by the (international) movement of people;
- iii. the country agencies, co-ordinated by JNCC, should develop contingency plans for National Nature Reserves in the eventuality of outbreaks on the reserves in a co-ordinated manner;
- iv. the European Commission has a role to play in co-ordinating action and this should be suggested at the Nature Directors' meeting in October;
- v. the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals also has a potentially important co-ordinating role globally;
- vi. following discussion with DOENI, CNCC confirmed they wished to sign up to the statement but asked it recognise the British Isle dimension.

7.4 Committee agreed the statement subject to the inclusion of CNCC and recognition of the British Isles (i.e. including all-Ireland) dimension. Committee expressed their thanks to the inter-agency Ornithology Group for drafting an excellent statement so quickly.

8. The Ramsar Convention's Ninth Conference of the Parties (JNCC 05 D09)

8.1 Dr Vincent introduced the paper, explaining that it had been produced to enable the Committee to comment on the agenda of the forthcoming Ramsar Conference of the Parties and to advise on priorities. The paper draws attention to three main areas of work:

- i. the relevance to the Convention of the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment;

- ii. a range of draft resolutions summarised in Annex 1 of the paper; the Annex summarises likely implications for the UK of these resolutions;
- iii. specific tasks which are proposed to be undertaken by the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP).

8.2 In discussion, it was noted that:

- i. a resolution on avian influenza would be fielded at the meeting;
- ii. the issue of climate change was also likely to be discussed.

8.3 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. organisms other than birds should receive more attention within the Convention, and the focus of the Convention should be on maintaining healthy wetland ecosystems;
- ii. invasive aliens continued to present major problems on wetlands;
- iii. mapping of wetlands to produce a global inventory, and the monitoring of wetlands was important;
- iv. there should be a focus on the value of wetlands in the provision of ecosystem services and the considerable cost of restoring these once wetland ecosystems are damaged or disrupted;
- v. the Convention had an important role in the provision of good practice, which needs to be disseminated better (e.g. by JNCC).

8.4 Committee requested that these points be advocated in the forthcoming discussions at the Ramsar CoP.

9. Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (JNCC 05 D11)

9.1 Dr Vincent explained that the paper presented an opportunity for the Committee to comment on the agenda for the Conference of the Parties and to advise on priorities. Dr Vincent drew the Committee's attention to the main issues which will be considered by the Conference. These are:

- i. the Convention's (draft) Strategic Plan for 2006-2011;
- ii. certain proposed changes to the Appendices of the Convention;

iii. the various other matters summarised in paragraph 2.2 of the paper.

9.2 Committee were informed that the Conference of the Parties would also consider the report of its Scientific Council, of which Professor Galbraith is the current, independent, Chair, and which meets immediately prior to the CoP. The report is not yet available, but a likely issue may be to propose a future international agreement on raptors. There may be implications for the UK in relation to this.

9.3 Committee discussed the need for the adoption of a new strategy for the convention and scientific council, the importance of focussing on priorities and looking forward and the importance of learning from other countries at the Convention.

9.4 Committee noted the paper and expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to consider the issues to be discussed in advance of the conferences.

10. Overview of JNCC priorities for policy and advocacy (JNCC 05 D10)

10.1 Mr Yeo introduced the paper, explaining that it provides an overview of UK-wide and international policies affecting nature conservation in the following sectors:

- i. sustainable development and environment integration;
- ii. biodiversity;
- iii. land use (agriculture and forestry);
- iv. marine;
- v. freshwater.

10.2 Mr Yeo went on to explain that this is the first time the Committee have had an opportunity to discuss JNCC's policy advocacy in the round. The global dimension was not covered at present but would be in the future. Committee were asked to discuss the key issues and advise on priorities for policy advocacy over the next 1-2 years.

10.3 In discussion Committee noted that:

- i. Earth heritage policy had not been included in the paper, but was an important area of work for JNCC;
- ii. it would be helpful to tabulate the priority actions and distinguish the roles of JNCC and the country agencies in order to focus effort and resources;
- iii. liaison with NGOs and partnership bodies such as IUCN may be helpful on certain issues;
- iv. JNCC should identify gaps where additional effort is needed;

- v. it was vital to use the expertise and knowledge in the country agencies to assist with the development of UK and international policy advice;
- vi. current policies set out in the paper reflected contemporary issues and there would be a need to keep the paper up to date, and also to look forward to likely future issues;
- vii. policy for the marine environment should meet the needs of the whole ecosystem and not become unduly focussed on fisheries issues;
- viii. references in the paper to 'UK' needed some tidying up as they did not always relate to the Northern Ireland situation.

10.4 Committee:

- i. noted the wide range of UK, European and global advice provided on the Committee's behalf;**
- ii. agreed that a half-day workshop/seminar should be arranged to allow a fuller discussion of policy priorities;**
- iii. agreed that overviews of key policy sectors should be presented to them on an annual basis;**
- iv. invited Members to e-mail Mr Yeo with any further comments on the paper.**

11. Framework for UK Nature Conservation – Progress Report (JNCC 05 N02)

11.1 The paper was presented to Committee as an update on the work undertaken by the Vision Working Group and the Group's early thoughts on the concept and the issues that it will consider in taking these forward. The following were brought to the Committee's attention:

- i. the Vision Working Group would consider how and when to go out to wider consultation;
- ii. JNCC can provide added value by co-ordinating views on the desired state of nature and identifying options for the overall approach to achieving that.

11.2 **Committee noted the paper.**

12. Update to the Joint Committee on conservation-related marine initiatives in the UK, Europe and North-East Atlantic (JNCC 05 N03)

12.1 Committee noted the paper.

13. Any other business

None was discussed.

Closed Session

1. Naming the Company

1.1 The minutes for this item are contained in a confidential addendum.