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## **JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

### **REVIEW OF INTER-AGENCY WORK: PROGRESS REPORT**

#### **Paper by David Hill, Ian McLean and Des Thompson**

1. The Review of Inter-Agency work originated from the June 2007 meeting of the Joint Committee (paper JNCC 07 D03 refers), when it was agreed to review the arrangements for carrying out joint work by the statutory conservation agencies.
2. Subsequently, Prof. David Hill (Joint Committee), Dr Ian McLean (JNCC), and Prof. Des Thompson (SNH) were invited to conduct the Review. They had an initial discussion with the Chief Scientists at their meeting on 24 January 2008. At this meeting it was agreed that the Review would encompass the Lead Agencies, Lead Coordination Networks and Inter-agency Scientific Working Groups (which report to the Chief Scientists), but would exclude the Inter-agency Policy Groups. Subsequently, two papers were prepared by Ian McLean and Des Thompson and sent to all target groups on 30 January 2008 and 13 February 2008. The first of these papers set out the aims and process for the Review and the second contained options for improving joint working and 10 key questions to prompt responses on high priority issues.
3. The feedback and responses from these papers were remarkably consistent with respect to the points made on key issues to be addressed and on the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements. On the basis of their experience of joint working, the content of responses received from the groups and on discussions with staff involved with inter-agency work, Ian McLean and Des Thompson prepared a paper for the Chief Scientists. This was sent to the Chief Scientists on 5 March and subsequently circulated to all groups on 7 March 2008.
4. We have been impressed with the knowledge and skills of group members; also the majority of groups function very well, produce high quality work and play a key role for ensuring a strong science base in all the agencies.
5. The initial phase of the Review has concentrated on considering the governance and management arrangements for the various groups, to ensure that work undertaken is of high priority, that work commissioned from the groups is commensurate with available resources, and that co-ordination of work between groups is satisfactory. The 5 March paper to the Chief Scientists contains recommendations for addressing some of the shortcomings which have been identified.

6. In summary, we have recommended to the Chief Scientists that:
  - i. the various inter-agency specialist groups be considered as a mechanism for joint delivery of agreed statutory functions via collaborative working between the four country agencies and JNCC, as well as a means of discharging certain JNCC functions, and that the overheads in relation to this working, should be reduced or eliminated;
  - ii. the Chief Scientists' Group should identify the strategic priorities for this inter-agency work over the medium-term;
  - iii. a second-tier inter-agency management group (termed the 'Joint Functions Quintet', comprising one representative from each of the country agencies and JNCC) be established to determine the work programmes to address these priorities, within the constraints of available resources, and to be responsible for delivery of the work.
7. The Chief Scientists' Group will consider these recommendations between now and the end of May, and a follow-up paper setting out recommendations to the Joint Committee on these governance aspects will be presented to the Joint Committee in June.
8. The Review has not, as yet, considered the make-up of the present inter-agency groups against perceived needs for inter-agency working in the medium to longer-term. This second phase of the Review will be undertaken over the latter half of 2008.
9. The Joint Committee is invited to **note** and **comment** on the issues raised in this paper.