



JNCC STRATEGY REVIEW

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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

JNCC STRATEGY REVIEW

Paper by Marcus Yeo and Sue McQueen (on behalf of the Committee strategy working group)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 25 September the Joint Committee initiated a review of JNCC's strategy with a wide-ranging discussion about JNCC's remit, future role and governance. A working group of Committee members¹ was established to refine thinking on these issues and prepare documents for discussion at the December Committee meeting.
- 1.2 Working group discussions were informed by material prepared by support company staff. Following exchange of emails and a meeting on 28 November, the working group has endorsed the following documents for wider Committee discussion:
 - i. a draft vision, mission and strategic objectives;
 - ii. summary of implications for JNCC's current work programmes;
 - iii. proposals for future Committee business;
 - iv. recommendations for changes to JNCC's corporate governance arrangements.
- 1.3 These documents are discussed in turn below.

2. Vision, mission and strategic objectives (Annex 1)

- 2.1 These are intended to replace JNCC's existing vision, mission and strategic objectives. They describe a more sharply focused role for JNCC and the support company, taking full account of devolution within the UK and emphasising the unique contribution that JNCC can make to domestic and international nature conservation.

3. Implications for JNCC's current work programmes (Annex 2)

- 3.1 Annex 2 contains an assessment of the implications of the revised strategy for JNCC's current work. The business plan for 2009/10² has been prepared in

¹ Patrick Casement, David Crawley, David Hill, John Lloyd Jones, Lynda Warren and Judith Webb

² See paper JNCC 08 P16, for discussion at the December Committee meeting

line with this, but full alignment will take more than one year to achieve because of the need for further consideration of a small number of issues, discussion with stakeholders, and, where necessary, preparation of plans to disengage from existing work.

- 3.2 The revised strategy clearly indicates a lighter role for JNCC in relation to some aspects of nature conservation at a UK scale (common standards, co-ordination and policy advice). However, further discussion with stakeholders is necessary before JNCC's future role in these areas can be fully defined.
- 3.3 Further discussion with stakeholders will also be required to clarify JNCC's role in relation to nature conservation in offshore waters, following the agreement between the UK and Scottish Governments that Scotland will get executively devolved responsibility for nature conservation out to 200 nautical miles.

4. Future Committee business (Annex 3)

- 4.1 The primary objective of the proposals in Annex 3 is to enable Committee to operate at a more strategic level than it has previously. Non-strategic decisions would be delegated (see section 5 below).
- 4.2 Once the principles have been agreed, a three-year programme of future Committee business will be drawn up.

5. Changes to JNCC's corporate governance arrangements (Annex 4)

- 5.1 Some changes to current governance arrangements are proposed to enable Committee to deliver the revised vision, mission and strategic objectives and to operate at a more strategic level. In particular, these changes will enable more effective input of UK Government views to relevant Committee discussions and put in place mechanisms for Committee to receive sound scientific advice and to delegate non-strategic business.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 Consultation with Defra and devolved administrations is scheduled for January/February 2009. This period will also allow time for further discussion of the revised strategy within the JNCC support company and the country conservation bodies.
- 6.2 The intention is for the Committee working group to continue to oversee the process and to bring revised proposals back to the March 2009 Committee meeting for final approval.

Annex 1. Proposals for revised vision, mission and strategic objectives

Vision for JNCC

JNCC will be recognised as a reputable provider of high-quality evidence and advice relating to UK-wide and international nature conservation, working with the country conservation bodies.

Mission for JNCC

JNCC will provide evidence and advice to assist the UK government and devolved administrations in developing and implementing their domestic and international policies on the protection of natural resources as an integral part of sustainable development. The evidence and advice will cover biodiversity and geodiversity issues which arise in one or more country within the UK and affect the interests of the UK as a whole, in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, and, where appropriate, internationally. JNCC will disseminate knowledge to foster understanding of these issues.

The JNCC Support Company provides support to enable JNCC to advance its vision and mission.

Our strengths are:

1. we operate at a UK level within a devolved UK
2. we have a strong culture of working with others and promoting collaboration between them
3. we work across multiple geographic scales, which strengthens our evidence base and our capability to deliver
4. we have, and draw together, a wealth of skills and knowledge on nature conservation in the terrestrial and marine environments

We will:

5. develop the UK, EU and global evidence base and identify future challenges to UK biodiversity and geodiversity by gathering intelligence and assessing risk and opportunity
6. provide advice and long-term thinking on solutions to biodiversity and geodiversity challenges, and engage in, commission and deliver initiatives to address these challenges:
 - a. outside territorial waters
 - b. in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies
 - c. globally
7. act as an informed link between national, European and global decision-making and implementation bodies, and provide advice on policy and implementation and communicate best practice to stakeholders working across and at these scales

Annex 2. Implications of the strategy review for JNCC’s current work programmes

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Implications of revised strategy</i>
Global Advice UK’s Global Impacts Overseas Territories European Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International work remains a core role for JNCC • Input from UK Government needed to determine priorities • Relevance to country bodies and devolved administrations to be enhanced, e.g. through horizon scanning, intelligence and analysis
Sustainability Advice Conservation Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift in emphasis from domestic to international nature conservation • Limited requirement for advice at a UK level (e.g. where policy is reserved) • UK standards and co-ordination only where driven by domestic, EU or global policy/legislation
Marine Management Advice Marine Mapping and Area Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JNCC retains a core role beyond territorial waters (but implications of devolution of nature conservation to Scotland out to 200 nautical miles need to be considered) • UK standards and co-ordination only where driven by domestic, EU or global policy/legislation
Surveillance and Monitoring Access to Information Policy-relevant Information and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a robust evidence base remains a core role for JNCC • Focus should be on supporting decision-making at UK and devolved levels and underpinning JNCC’s international work

Annex 3. Framework for future Committee business

Broad category	Reason for Committee engagement	Type of item	Examples	Timing	Comments
1. Strategies for JNCC's work or collaborative work with and between the UK conservation bodies	To ensure they support the commitments of UK government and devolved administrations	Agreeing future priorities and/or arrangements for implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseas Territories • Surveillance strategies (terrestrial and marine) • Common standards • Landscape-scale conservation • Biodiversity research • Ecosystem goods and services 	Structured forward programme	
	To decide if they reflect JNCC's strategic priorities and represent value for money	Discussing implications of evidence/intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of pressures on biodiversity across the UK • Forward look at EU policy developments • Feedback from meetings of multilateral environmental agreements 	Annually	
		Identifying work that requires collaboration/delivery by the country conservation agencies and agreeing high-level principles for how this should be done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to be undertaken by inter-agency groups 	Annually	
2. Advice on the development or implementation of policy/legislation, which is potentially high-risk or highly beneficial for UK Government, devolved administrations or JNCC	<p>To satisfy itself that advice is sound</p> <p>To satisfy itself that opportunities to realise significant benefits are taken</p>	High-level approach/position for a policy sector, across all geographical scales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change • Invasive alien species • Energy • Forestry • Geoconservation 	Structured forward programme	This approach is generally preferable to advising on specific policies. May include sign-off of position statements.

Broad category	Reason for Committee engagement	Type of item	Examples	Timing	Comments
		Advice on specific items of policy or legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Fisheries Policy reform • Quinquennial review of schedules of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 	Dictated by political timetables	Where not covered by wider policy discussions and sufficiently important to justify Committee involvement
		Recommendations for protected sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offshore marine protected areas (Natura 2000 sites and Marine Conservation Zones) 	As necessary	
3. New thinking and approaches for or affecting nature conservation	To share knowledge and ideas with a potentially significant impact on nature conservation strategy or the work of JNCC and the UK conservation bodies	Strategic discussions on emerging issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geo-engineering • Diseases/pathogens • Earth observation (implications for environmental monitoring) • Social/economic changes 	Structured forward programme	Could have one major discussion of this type each year, possibly with presentations from academics and others, workshop sessions, etc
4. Governance matters	To provide overall direction to work	Agreeing corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement of corporate/business plans and strategy 	Annual timetable	
	To decide responses to any potential change to JNCC's remit To fulfil core governance obligations	Discussing implications for JNCC of political changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution • Spending Reviews 	As required	

Broad category	Reason for Committee engagement	Type of item	Examples	Timing	Comments
		Fulfilling governance obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approving JNCC's annual report • Receiving annual report from the Audit and Risk Management Committee 	Annual timetable	Some can be done by correspondence
		Fulfilling governance obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approving changes to standing orders and governance arrangements • Approving projects over £300k • Appointing a Managing Director 	As required	
5. Delegated (or for information only)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates on specific work areas • Contractual arrangements • Executive working arrangements • Advice on specific policies/legislation (with some exceptions) • Priorities at project level • Other non-strategic issues 		

Annex 4. Proposed changes to JNCC's corporate governance arrangements

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Governance arrangements should be designed with the following principles in mind:
- i. agendas are developed for Committee that reflect its role as a forum bringing together the various interests of its constituents;
 - ii. Committee business should be restricted to strategic issues. Non-strategic decisions associated with Committee's remit should be delegated to competent groups;
 - iii. Committee decisions should be delivered through a portfolio of implementation mechanisms comprising support company delivery, collaboration between the support company and the country conservation agencies, collaboration between the country conservation agencies, or delivery by a designated country conservation agency;
 - iv. the Committee should function strongly as a cohesive body, taking collective responsibility for its whole remit.

2. Proposals to provide expertise on, and represent interests in, 'reserved' work (international and offshore marine)

- 2.1 Committee papers will be sent to relevant Defra officials ahead of each meeting inviting comments. Any substantive comments will be reported at the meeting.
- 2.2 Where it is deemed appropriate, a Defra official will be invited to attend for agenda items relevant to Defra's UK responsibilities and contribute to discussions. However, Defra officials will play no formal part in decision-making.
- 2.3 Additionally, the Chairman will seek regular meetings with Defra ministers (in addition to meetings with ministers of devolved governments) to ensure Defra's priorities are understood and will report back to the Committee. The Chairman will not be required to support Defra's views – just to ensure that they are presented to Committee.
- 2.4 Similar arrangements will be put in place to ensure input from other UK Government departments (e.g. FCO and DECC) where Committee considers this to be appropriate.

3. Proposals to provide Committee with scientific advice

- 3.1 It is important that Committee receives sound advice to support it in making high-level science decisions or other strategic decisions based on science. On matters of interest to the country conservation agencies, Committee may ask

for advice from the inter-agency Chief Scientists' Group, under current informal arrangements. The support company will be responsible for ensuring that this advice is submitted to the Committee in an appropriate form, e.g. by inclusion within Committee papers.

- 3.2 Scientific advice on matters that are not of interest to the country conservation agencies will be provided to Committee by the support company.

4. Proposals to support Committee in operating at a strategic level

- 4.1 The Executive Management Board (EMB) will be proactive in ensuring that Committee agendas are focussed on strategic issues (as set out in Annex 3).
- 4.2 On strategic matters that are of interest to the country conservation agencies, Committee may delegate to EMB responsibility for reaching agreement between the support company and the agencies prior to the meeting. EMB will reflect the agreed position in papers or, where agreement has not been reached, set out the issues for review and resolution by Committee. Matters with a strong political dimension will be referred to Committee.
- 4.3 Non-strategic decisions will be delegated to EMB. Significant decisions will be reported to Committee as part of a noting agenda. On matters of interest to the country conservation agencies, EMB will seek to establish an agreed position between the support company and the agencies. If agreement cannot be reached, EMB will set out the issues for review by, and direction from, Committee.

5. Proposals to enable Committee business to be delivered through a portfolio of delivery mechanisms

- 5.1 The support company will be responsible for ensuring work arising from JNCC decisions is taken forward regardless of the ultimate delivery body or bodies. Where appropriate, it will lead or co-ordinate such work.
- 5.2 The Committee will review annually what matters require collaboration/delivery by the country conservation agencies and agree high-level principles for how this should be done. The support company will be responsible for reporting back to Committee on such work.
- 5.3 Where the country conservation agencies wish to collaborate on issues which are outside JNCC's remit this will be without any oversight by Committee or the support company.