

JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY

Present:

Dr Bridgewater
Mr Casement
Mr Crawley
Professor Hill
Dr Joyce
Mr Pritchard
Professor Usher
Professor Warren
Judith Webb
Mr Archdale – via video-conference

In attendance:

Dr Battersby (Item 5)
Dr Donovan (Item 9)
Professor Galbraith
Dr Goold
Mrs McQueen
Mrs Quince (Secretary)
Mr Seymour
Dr Stott
Dr Tew
Mr Thomas
Mr Way (Item 8)
Mr Yeo

Apologies: Mr Christensen, Mr Lloyd Jones and Mr Thin (Members), Dr Philips and Dr Jardine (Attendees).

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1. Dr Bridgewater's opening remarks

- 1.1 Dr Bridgewater welcomed Mr Yeo to his first meeting as Managing Director. Mr Yeo's previous position will be temporarily filled by Sue McQueen as Director of Corporate Services and Vin Fleming as Head of European and Global Advice.
- 1.2 Dr Bridgewater informed members that Mr Christensen was the preferred candidate for appointment to the Chair of Natural England.
- 1.3 Dr Bridgewater proposed to establish a sub-group to support a review of Committee performance. A Government pro-forma would be adapted to JNCC and issued shortly to members and a summary of the results presented at the December meeting. Joint Committee endorsed the proposal and membership was confirmed as follows:

Dr Bridgewater (Chair)
Mr Crawley
Mr Casement
Mr Pritchard
Judith Webb
- 1.4 Dr Bridgewater had written, and had published, a letter to the New Scientist presenting his personal views about proposals to establish an international scientific body similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to address issues of biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES). An opportunity for a fuller discussion on the development of a JNCC strategy for influencing and engaging with international scientific initiatives has been scheduled for the December Committee meeting.
- 1.5 The Chair and Deputy Chair had recently met Mike Pienkowski and Chris Tydeman from the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum. A Memorandum of Understanding between the JNCC and the Forum will be drawn up, which will set out how the two parties will work together in future.
- 1.6 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that this would be Professor Usher's last meeting. He thanked Professor Usher for his contribution to the work of JNCC and presented him with a card and gift on behalf of the Committee.
- 1.7 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that Mr Richard Chapman from the Defra team responsible for JNCC sponsorship would be leaving shortly to take

up a new post within Defra. Dr Bridgewater thanked Mr Chapman for his work on behalf of JNCC and wished him well in his new post.

2. Declaration of interests

2.1 Judith Webb declared an interest in Item 7 as Chair of the England Woodland Biodiversity Group and as a member of the England Biodiversity Group. Professor Usher declared an interest in Item 5 as a member of the Environmental Protection Agency's (Republic of Ireland) Steering Committee on Invasive Alien Species in Irish Water Bodies, and in items 7 and 11 as a member of the Review Group reviewing Defra's Biodiversity Research Programme 1995-2008. The Chair ruled that these did not conflict with their Committee interests.

3. Amendments to the minutes of the eighty second meeting

3.1 An amendment suggested by Mr Crawley has been included and members were informed intersessionally of this change.

4. Matters arising (JNCC 09 P17)

4.1 Committee noted paper JNCC 09 P17. Additionally, Dr Bridgewater informed Committee that the Inter-Agency Climate Change Forum would be meeting on 25th September and it was hoped that the climate change publication would be signed-off then. On item 7, Dr Bridgewater asked that nominations from CCW and NE for the Committee's Marine Protected Areas sub-group be finalised as quickly as possible. CCW confirmed that they were close to announcing their appointment, and NE confirmed they were recruiting a new Board member with marine expertise who would be appointed to the sub-group.

5. Priorities for JNCC's work on non-native invasive species (JNCC 09 P16)

5.1 Dr Battersby introduced the paper which presented an updated set of priorities since the Committee had last discussed them in March 2007 and the main areas of work for JNCC over the next 3-5 years. The new priorities do not represent a major change in direction, but rather a sharpened focus on international aspects (especially the Overseas Territories), developing a sound evidence base, and dealing with invasive non-native species in the marine environment. Dr Battersby informed members that the Chief Scientists Group had considered the paper and were content with the proposals.

5.2 Dr Bridgewater thanked Huw Thomas and Niall Moore for an informative presentation on this subject the previous evening which had provided members with background on the GB Non-Native Species Strategy.

5.2 In discussion the following points were raised regarding the four priorities in the paper:

- i) 5.3 (iii) says ‘JNCC may review the effectiveness of measures adopted’ in relation to any changes made to Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. It was noted that the terms of reference for this had not yet been decided;
- ii) it was noted that there were particular difficulties in dealing with non-natives in the marine environment, and that consideration should be given to co-ordinating actions between inshore and offshore waters;
- iii) the paper was focussed on GB activities and paid little attention to the all-Ireland strategy for non-native species. Stronger linkages between Ireland and the GB Programme Board should be developed to facilitate a two-way flow of information between GB and Irish colleagues;
- iv) it was noted that not all invasive species are non-natives, although it was acknowledged that this was an issue that lay outside the scope of the GB Non-Native Species Strategy; and
- v) investing resources early on facilitated successful action to halt the spread of non-native invasive species.

5.3 In conclusion the Committee agreed the JNCC had an important role to play in respect of non-native species. Raising the profile and awareness of this area was key to dealing with problems and the Committee welcomed the proactive role JNCC was taking.

5.4 Joint Committee **endorsed** the priorities for JNCC’s future work on invasive non-native species, subject to the minor amendments contained above.

6. Developing guidance for work on UK-wide conservation standards: resource implications (JNCC 09 P15)

Dr Stott introduced a follow-up paper to the one members considered at the June meeting which responds to a request from the Committee to undertake an assessment of the resource implications of taking forward a programme of high priority existing work and highly desirable new work. Dr Stott confirmed that it was intended to take forward high and medium priorities on the list subject to resources available, including resources that had been identified as necessary within the country conservation bodies. He confirmed that, in response to the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills select committee report on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), an inter-agency group would be established to refine the scope of the review of guidelines on biological SSSIs and produce a work programme by the end of the year.

6.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i) inter-agency work on common standards for surveillance was the most important piece of work, particularly in relation to meeting Habitats Directive requirements;

- ii) Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) should be included within the scope of work on SSSIs;
- iii) the work on SSSI guidelines should be carefully scoped to keep JNCC and country agency effort to the minimum necessary and should take into account the differing priorities within the country conservation bodies.

6.3 The Joint Committee **noted** the resource implications for JNCC and the country agencies; **noted** that priority work to deliver work on UK-wide conservation standards would be subject to corporate planning decisions and funding settlements in future years; and **confirmed** the priorities shown in Table 1 of the paper.

7. The role of JNCC in UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) implementation, reporting and research co-ordination (JNCC 09 P14)

7.1 Dr Stott introduced the paper which described the structure and governance for UK Biodiversity Action Plan implementation under the UK strategic framework. The paper provides an overview of UK responsibilities, including the role of JNCC. He confirmed that an earlier draft of the paper had been seen by the Chief Scientists Group and their comments had been incorporated into the version presented.

7.2 Mr Yeo advised that the Overseas Territories were omitted from this paper, but government had recently agreed a biodiversity strategy for the Territories, and a paper on how JNCC would support the strategy would be presented to the December Committee meeting.

7.3 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i) the key performance indicators in Annex 1 have been signed off by the Committee (as part of the 2009/10 business plan);
- ii) Figure 1 illustrated the complexity of the structure of implementation and governance under the UK Strategic Framework. Communicating roles in a simple way would assist stakeholders in understanding JNCC's role.

7.4 In conclusion, the Committee noted the significant role JNCC had in prioritising and focussing input and advising Government in this area.

7.5 Joint Committee **endorsed** the JNCC's role, summarised in 4.1 of the paper and agreed that the paper should be forwarded to the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee, with a proposal that Defra, devolved administrations, country conservation bodies and Wildlife and Countryside Link supply information on their respective roles to expand Annex 1.

8. BTO Agreement (Oral report)

- 8.1 Mr Way gave an oral report on the progress so far on the re-negotiation of the BTO-JNCC Partnership Agreement. He explained that they were currently considering the content and cost of a new agreement. He advised members that licensing was defined as a service under the EU Services Directive and would be subject to a separate competitive tendering exercise.
- 8.2 Joint Committee **noted** the importance of this agreement in helping JNCC achieve its strategic objectives. The enhancement in systems used by the BTO to integrate data and their work extending beyond birds into other areas was welcomed. The Committee would be kept updated of progress on the agreement and it was hoped a final draft agreement would be prepared for December.

9. A proactive JNCC response to the economic recession (JNCC 09 D06)

- 9.1 Dr Donovan introduced the paper which builds on the paper and presentation given to the Joint Committee at their June meeting. The paper proposed four broad actions for JNCC to undertake in response to the economic recession.
- 9.2 In discussion the following points were raised:
- i) with reduced resources, it was important to strengthen international collaboration;
 - ii) the work requires initial investment from JNCC at a time when policy is being formulated. JNCC should consider whether it has adequate resources to undertake this work and should explore whether funding is available from other departments, such as the Department for International Development;
 - iii) JNCC has an important role in articulating why nature conservation matters now and in the future. In this context, it will be necessary to describe the linkages between nature conservation and ecosystem services and say why a better understanding of the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services should lead to better policies and decision-making; and
 - iv) 6.2 in the paper highlights the enormous task ahead for JNCC and the country conservation bodies in communicating the role the environment plays in shaping economic growth and development. The word 'biodiversity' is often misunderstood but is a politically important word. To this end, collaboration with the country bodies to establish synergies was seen as vital. Natural England informed the Committee that they would shortly be launching a report called 'Nature's Value' which communicated the message that the environment is the solution to economic problems and not the problem.
- 9.3 The Joint Committee **agreed** that JNCC should focus its effort wisely given the limited resources available to take this work forward. Communicating the

link between nature conservation and economic opportunity and showing how nature conservation underpins the economy was seen as vital.

10. JNCC contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity (JNCC 09 D08)

10.1 Mr Yeo introduced the paper which discussed proposals for JNCC's contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) in 2010.

10.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i) it will be important to say why the 2010 target has been missed and what the organisations involved are doing to put that right;
- ii) IYB presented an opportunity for some smart thinking about how we convey key messages. Some ideas involving the use of social networking media were discussed; and
- iii) the plan as presented in the paper lacked some ambition and could be expanded to address this.

10.3 Joint Committee **discussed** the proposals for JNCC's contribution to IYB and were supportive of the proposals, subject to the amendments outlined above.

11. Report from the Executive Management Board (JNCC 09 D07)

11.1 Joint Committee **noted** the report with no further discussion.

12. JNCC priorities and funding for 2010/11 (JNCC 09 P18)

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

15. Maintaining favourable conservation status of Harbour Porpoise (JNCC 09 P19)

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

14. AOB

There was no other business.

15. Date and venue of the next meeting

3 December 2009 in Peterborough.