



JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 25TH MARCH 2010 AT
MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY**

This paper was provided to the Joint Committee for decision/discussion or information. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for Committee's position on the paper.

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CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 25TH MARCH 2010 AT MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY

Present:

Mr Archdale
Dr Bridgewater
Dr Brown
Mr Casement
Mr Christensen
Mr Crawley
Mr Duke
Professor Hill
Dr Joyce
Mr Parry
Mr Pritchard
Professor Warren
Judith Webb

In Attendance:

Ms Davies
Dr Goold
Mr Laxton (item 5)
Mrs McQueen
Mrs Quince (Secretary)
Mr Seymour
Dr Stott
Dr Tew
Mr Thomas
Mr Yeo
Mr Wakenhut (item 5)

Apologies: Mr Thin (Member), Dr Philips, Dr Fleming & Dr Jardine (Attendees)

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1. Dr Bridgewater's opening remarks

- 1.1 Dr Bridgewater welcomed Mr Morgan Parry, Chairman CCW, to his first meeting.
- 1.2 Dr Bridgewater welcomed Ms Susan Davies, Director of Policy and Advice in SNH, to her first meeting, replacing Professor Galbraith as a Committee attendee.
- 1.3 Dr Bridgewater welcomed Mr François Wakenhut from the European Commission to the meeting.
- 1.4 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that this would be Dr Stott's last meeting as he would be returning to Defra in April.
- 1.5 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that Heloise Tierney (Defra sponsorship) had replaced Richard Chapman and would be observing the meeting.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 Mr Duke declared an interest in the following two areas:
 - i. assisting the Living With Environmental Change programme with their EU interface. This relates to agenda item 5; and
 - ii. involvement as Chair-designate of a new European Science Foundation research networking programme on raptor research and monitoring (EURAPMON). This relates to agenda item 8.

3. Amendments to the minutes of the eighty-fourth meeting

- 3.1 Amendments suggested by Mr Pritchard had been included. The minutes were agreed subject to the numbering of the confidential addendum being changed to 'Eighty Fourth meeting'. Chairman confirmed that this was the eighty-fifth meeting of the JNCC, not the eighty-first as stated on the agenda.

4. Matters arising

- 4.1 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that in early March JNCC had sent revised formal advice to Defra on the Dogger Bank SAC. He confirmed that all members of the Committee sub-group had been in agreement on the recommendations. Work on preparing an updated impact assessment, consultation document, consultee list and amended website text based on the March 2010 site recommendation had been completed. A consultation process could therefore begin within a few days of permission from Defra being received. Uncertainty remained as to whether this would happen before purdah. Note provided subsequent to the meeting: The consultation process did not formally begin before purdah, but work continues on the preparation of required materials.
- 4.2 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that the climate change booklet is now in the process of being printed. However, it will not be issued until after purdah.
- 4.3 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that the 2010/11 Business Plan had been approved by Committee members inter-sessionally and sent to Defra for Ministerial approval. At Defra's request the scope of the plan was reduced from a 3 year to a 1 year plan. Work would continue on planning for future years and a more in-depth discussion on priorities would take place at the June meeting. Note provided subsequent to the meeting: All Ministers have now signed off on the 2010/2011 plan.

5. Presentation by Mr Francois Wakenhut

- 5.1 The Committee received a presentation from Mr François Wakenhut on new Commission priorities for nature policy. Mr Wakenhut explained the new policy context using a series of headings, including:
- i. new actors;
 - ii. new structure;
 - iii. new rules;
 - iv. new background; and
 - v. new priorities – including EU2020.
- 5.2 The presentation explained the weaknesses of the 2001-2010 framework and why the 2010 target was not met. Lessons learnt from 2010 and a new prioritisation process would help ensure the success of the post-2010 biodiversity strategy. This new strategy is currently being drafted and will be ready by the end of the year.
- 5.3 Dr Bridgewater thanked Mr Wakenhut for an informative and comprehensive presentation.

5A Barroso II: the first post-Lisbon Treaty period for the EU and the implication of policy priorities for JNCC (JNCC 10 D03)

5A.1 The paper builds on an initial EU forward Look provided to the Committee in December. The paper sets out the impact of the Lisbon Treaty in the policy fields of direct relevance to the work of the JNCC as well as recent changes to the EU institutions and the broad policy priorities for the EU over the next five years. Attention was drawn to three issues in the paper; firstly, the increased role of the Parliament in decisions on the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy, secondly, the likely dominance of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, and thirdly, the continuing challenge to keep biodiversity on the political agenda.

5A.2 The Committee noted the paper, and in discussion the following points were raised:

- i. creating links between biodiversity and health, education and social well-being would help to re-enforce the biodiversity message;
- ii. understanding the economic value of ecosystems and undertaking work to develop ‘beyond GDP’ indicators was important. With the current ‘black hole’ in the world economy, it was an important time to raise the profile of biodiversity but in a very focussed way - by communicating clearly what we should try to conserve and why, and using language which is easily understood by all;
- iii. a lack of internal consistency had hampered the achievement of the 2010 targets. Whilst it was important to produce the 2020 biodiversity strategy within a reasonable timeframe, a strategy should not be formulated until the results of discussions to take place at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya in October are known;
- iv. there was a need to establish relationships between protected areas and the wider countryside and to state clearly how they link and benefit each other;
- v. it was important to keep the devolved parliaments ‘in the loop’ and informed of developments;
- vi. given the enhanced role of the European Parliament, we need to consider how to interact with MEPs;
- vii. an all-Ireland approach to invasive non-native species was well underway and was a good example of working with another EU Member State across a shared land border.

5A.3 Committee **noted** and **agreed** the actions contained in 1.1 (i-v). In addition, Committee agreed that:

- i. a matrix should be produced for each policy area, identifying the key moments when the UK nature conservation bodies could contribute to the policy-making process;
- ii. a follow-up discussion should be held at the June Committee meeting, with the aim of discussing how JNCC and the country conservation bodies could make best use of their resources and achieve a consistent and influential role on European issues.

6. JNCC role and priorities in the identification of future challenges for UK and global biodiversity (JNCC 10 D01)

6.1 The paper stems from March last year when Committee asked for an opportunity to discuss emerging scientific issues on an annual basis. The paper reviews the role and priorities for ‘futures’ work within JNCC and proposes how JNCC, with limited resources, can add value to existing initiatives and provide advice on future challenges to the Joint Committee.

6.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. a meta-analysis approach by JNCC would help organisations to plan and would aid the decision-making process and communication of key messages;
- ii. developing a focus on the foresight gaps using a light touch approach would help prevent duplication across the bodies; and
- iii. JNCC offered a mechanism for looking at this work in a UK context and its role could be to facilitate discussion of the outputs of horizon scanning by the country conservation bodies and others.

6.3 Committee **discussed** and **adopted** the conclusions and recommendations presented in Section 5 of the paper. In conclusion, Committee agreed that JNCC should take a light touch approach to this work, sharing information to avoid overlap. A pre-dinner presentation on ‘futures’ work would be arranged for a future meeting.

7. Scope and priorities for JNCC work on climate change and energy (JNCC 10 D04)

7.1 Climate change and energy are major drivers for work across JNCC and the country conservation bodies. The purpose of the paper was to review the scope of JNCC’s work on climate change and energy and to set out priorities for the next 3-5 years. The paper proposes priorities for work by JNCC which are appropriate to JNCC’s UK and international roles and highlights those which add value to the work of the country conservation bodies. The paper focuses on co-ordination in development of the UK evidence base; advice with respect to offshore marine developments; and advice and evidence to support European and global policy development, including the Overseas Territories.

UK co-ordination is facilitated by the existing Inter-Agency Climate Change Forum.

7.2 In discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. it was noted that the paper had not been to the Inter-Agency Forum before coming to Committee;
- ii. the programme of work seemed ambitious given the limited resources available. Some further prioritisation of objectives might be necessary in order to make them achievable, e.g. giving priority to support for the Overseas Territories. Working with the country conservation bodies and using their combined intellectual resources would help ensure effective use of resources;
- iii. the paper should give greater profile to long-term plankton recording in relation to climate change; and
- iv. links with forestry (with reference to the 'Read Report') and peatland ecosystems should not be forgotten.

7.3 Committee **considered** the review of the scope of JNCC's work on climate change and energy and **discussed** the 10 priorities identified for the next 3-5 years. The Committee welcomed climate change and biodiversity coming together in a single framework. Committee noted that the annual report from the Inter-Agency Climate Change Forum (IACCF) would be presented at the December meeting, however a paper on revised priorities, taking into account the Committee's views above, should be produced before then following discussions at the next meeting of the IACCF.

8 Using surveillance of terrestrial biodiversity to detect and assess causes of change (JNCC 10 D02)

8.1 Dr Stott introduced the paper explaining that it takes a critical look at surveillance schemes, reviewing evidence for major pressures affecting UK biodiversity and in section 4 makes recommendations for improving the utility of surveillance to assess pressures.

8.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. one way of improving surveillance would be to identify the 'hotspots' and apply resources to address the problems;
- ii. working to improve the cost-effectiveness of surveillance and providing added value through analysis of pressures was welcomed, but it should be recognised that other types of evidence (e.g. research) are also necessary to establish causal linkages; and
- iii. effective communication of the causes of biodiversity loss was essential. The diagram on page 4 should be amended to reflect the fact

that at present, responses are having little if no impact on the driving forces.

- 8.3 Committee **considered** the summary of a review of pressures impacting on UK biodiversity and the limitations of using data from surveillance schemes. Committee **discussed** and **endorsed** the recommendations for improvements to surveillance presented in section 4. In conclusion Committee noted the wider issues raised in the paper concerning the need to address the driving forces of biodiversity loss such as population growth, economic growth and consumption, as well as seeking to reduce or prevent impacts through conservation actions.

9 Improving the effectiveness of JNCC communications (JNCC 10 D06)

- 9.1 Mrs McQueen introduced the paper which sets out how the JNCC intend to increase their contribution to improving awareness and understanding of nature conservation, and the contribution JNCC makes to it, whilst reducing the cost and negative environmental impact of communication activities. She drew Members' attention to section 6 of the paper, which sets out proposals for how Committee members could help to further improve dialogue between JNCC and its sponsor bodies. Members were invited to a demonstration of the revised JNCC website over lunch.
- 9.2 In discussing specific action proposed for Committee members, the following points were raised:
- i. Committee members from the country conservation bodies have a key role in raising understanding about the work of JNCC with the devolved administrations and explaining how JNCC complements the work of the country bodies;
 - ii. to support the independent members' communications activities, a timetable of events which members might attend, together with a pro-forma to report back useful information, should be circulated;
 - iii. JNCC should consider being more proactive in engaging with the voluntary conservation sector to help convey the key messages;
 - iv. building trust and confidence in the brand would aid understanding of JNCC's role in a UK network.
- 9.3 More general comments on the paper included:
- i. the simple messages to be conveyed should a) use language which resonates with decision makers such as ecosystem services and b) explain these concepts in simple terms;
 - ii. the bullet points contained in section 2.2 (i) could be used as a useful cross-check when producing press releases;

- iii. minutes of JNCC meetings should be circulated to country conservation Board/Council members by their secretariats, rather than by JNCC (6.1 (iii));
- iv. in Annex 2 (point 1 ii), the word ‘ensure’ should be removed from the first line; and
- v. Annex 2 (point 3 i) undersells JNCC and could be bolstered to reflect a higher profile.

9.4 Committee **noted** and **discussed** the developments to JNCC’s communications activities and **discussed** and **agreed** specific action proposed for Committee members to improve communications with country body Boards/Councils and the devolved administrations, subject to the comments/amendments above.

10 Marine Strategy Framework Directive – implications and opportunities for JNCC (JNCC 10 P02)

10.1 Dr Goold introduced the paper explaining that the Marine Strategy Framework Directive is the most significant piece of European marine legislation for over a decade. He explained that the Directive will be complementary to, and provide the overarching framework for, a number of other key Directives and legislation at the European and UK level.

10.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. investing time and effort in the early stages, and helping to shape approaches to implementing the Directive was the most effective way forward;
- ii. JNCC should take this work forward (in close co-operation) with the country conservation bodies; and
- iii. being able to respond quickly to changes to requirements for delivery was crucial.

10.3 Committee **discussed** the paper and:

- i. **noted** the recent developments in implementation of the MSFD and its potential to deliver substantial improvements in the quality of the marine environment;
- ii. **agreed** in principle the possible roles JNCC could play in delivery of the Directive as set out in paragraph 4.4, and recommends that these be further discussed with Government with a view to clarifying and agreeing JNCC’s future roles with respect to MSFD.
- iii. **agreed** in principle the potential benefits of EU and OSPAR-level engagement in key aspects of MSFD delivery, particularly in the period

to July 2012 (as set out in paragraph 3.1), where early investment of effort can lead to long-term benefits in delivery of the Directive.

- iv. **noted** that requirements for delivery of the MSFD are likely to change rapidly over the next 2-3 years and that JNCC may need to respond to these changing and additional requirements.

11. Report from the Executive Management Board

11.1 Mr Yeo introduced the paper which set out a summary of discussions from recent meetings of the Executive Management Board.

11.2 Committee **noted** the paper.

12. AOB

12.1 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that he was currently exploring ways of achieving what the Committee does in a more cost effective manner. This included reducing the number of full meetings per year. This point would be explored further at the June meeting.

12.2 Dr Bridgewater informed the Committee that the June meeting in Bristol would be used to raise the profile of JNCC and the country conservation bodies within Defra. An informal buffet function would be arranged and a range of Defra staff invited to attend.

13. Date and venue of the next meeting

16/17 June 2010 in Bristol (venue/programme to be confirmed).