



**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER 2010 AT
MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY**

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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

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Present

Mr Archdale (via video-conference)
Dr Bridgewater
Dr Brown
Mr Casement
Mr Christensen
Mr Crawley
Dr Joyce
Mr Pritchard
Professor Warren

In attendance

Ms Battersby (Item 6)
Dr Fleming
Dr Goold
Mr Hill (representing Mr Wood)
Mr Laxton (Item 6)
Mrs Quince (Secretary)
Mr Rose
Mr Seymour
Mr Yeo

Apologies:, Mr Duke, Professor Hill, Mr Parry, Mr Thin, Judith Webb (Members) and Ms Davies, Ms Phillips, Mr Jardine and Mrs McQueen (Attendees).

1. Chair's opening remarks

- 1.1 Dr Bridgewater welcomed everyone to the eighty-eighth meeting of the JNCC. He noted that Ms Webb had been able to attend the Audit committee, but had a clash with a Forestry commission meeting and he had agreed with her that she should attend that meeting as priority. He noted Mr Duke had needed to return to Brussels urgently to deal with other business, and the uncertainty of the Eurostar schedule.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 Nothing was declared.

3. Amendments to the minutes of the June 2010 meeting (JNCC 10 P09)

- 3.1 The amended minutes were agreed.

4. Matters arising (JNCC 10 P14)

- 4.1 10.5 (iv) SNH have agreed to provide secretariat support and chairmanship to the Land Use Policy Group from 1 April 2011.
- 4.2 7.7 The terms of reference for the Chief Scientists Group are currently being re-drafted to ensure the Group takes a more active role in decision-making and provides advice to the Joint Committee when required. The new ToR will include the marine area.
- 4.3 Two additional items were discussed:

- i. Members were informed that the Public Bodies Bill was currently being discussed in the House of Lords. JNCC is listed on two schedules (3 and 7). Schedule 3 would allow changes to governance and constitutional arrangements and schedule 7 allows ministers to change responsibilities, abolish and/or merge public bodies. Both schedules allow ministers to make changes without going back to Parliament.
- ii. Members had been circulated some additional informal papers by email. These included two reports on the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya and a report on two European events attended by Mr Duke.

5. JNCC Corporate Plan 2011-2015 (JNCC 10 P15)

- 5.1 Mr Yeo gave a presentation on possible JNCC spending profiles over the Spending Review period 2011-15, using different scenarios based upon different percentage cuts to all three funding streams. Mr Yeo explained that to date JNCC had received no indication on funding from Defra, although it was hoped that information would be received before Christmas. A cut in the broad range of 20-30% over the next four years was likely. The JNCC Sponsors Group will meet on 8 December to discuss JNCC funding.
- 5.2 A draft corporate plan, which would be a more succinct document with high-level objectives, would be ready to be signed off by the Committee intersessionally in mid January, with consultation on the plan taking place during February. A Final sign-off should take place at the March Committee meeting with ministers approving the plan in April.
- 5.3 In discussion the following points were raised:
 - i. under all funding scenarios the Geological Conservation Review database would be maintained and work to identify inshore Special Protection Areas would continue;
 - ii. the outcome of the Spending Review would affect the shape of the organisation. Reductions in staffing over the next four years would require restructuring of some teams. The number of directors would be reduced. A voluntary redundancy programme is due to be implemented in early 2011;
 - iii. a clear united voice across the conservation bodies regarding future priorities would convey a powerful message at the Sponsors Group Meeting on 8 December;
 - iv. co-ordination and collaboration between JNCC and the country conservation bodies was more vital than ever with increasing demands and decreasing budgets. The corporate plan must reflect the priorities of all four administrations and the Sponsors Group should agree a fair price for delivery of those priorities;
 - v. the current climate offered the opportunity to work closely with Defra, being proactive and offering solutions. JNCC has a role to play in helping to ensure that ministers in the coalition are aware of the

sensitivities around UK work and liaise appropriately with their opposite numbers in the devolved administrations.

- 5.4 The Committee **noted** progress in preparing the corporate plan for 2011-15 and **confirmed** that the plan should be a succinct document with a small number of high-level objectives. They **approved** the provisional shape of the plan as set out in Annex 1.
- 5.5 The Committee **agreed** to form a sub-group to sign off the draft corporate plan in January for subsequent consultation with stakeholders. Sub-group membership would be as follows:

Peter Bridgewater
Lynda Warren
Morgan Parry
David Crawley
Patrick Casement

6. Provision of advice and evidence to UK Governments on EU initiatives planned for 2011 and beyond: key areas for nature conservation (JNCC 10 D11)

- 6.1 Mr Laxton and Dr Battersby gave a presentation on the development of an EU information and advice framework and how this would be used to guide the timing and content of future advice to UK Government and, through the country conservation bodies, to the Governments for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This included a matrix showing the relationship between planned EU initiatives and UK and devolved Government priorities. Road maps will be developed for each of the priorities. Members were encouraged to access the UKNLO website where the information was contained. This would form part of the JNCC website in the New Year.
- 6.2 The Committee **noted** the work undertaken to provide information on the range of policies under development within the EU and **discussed** and **considered** issues of high importance on which to focus the provision of advice to UK governments and whether effort should be focused on biodiversity initiatives only or on cross-sectoral issues also.
- 6.3 In discussion the following points were raised:
- i. Committee acknowledged this as an impressive piece of work that would be very helpful to the country conservation bodies;
 - ii. it was disappointing to see the low profile of biodiversity within the European Commission work programme. It would be important to show the links between biodiversity and other sectors, for example through ecosystem services;
 - iii. once JNCC's funding for 2011/12 is known more focus will be given to how this area of work should be developed.

7. Surveillance strategy review and revision (JNCC 10 D12)

- 7.1 A presentation had been given the previous evening on the work in this area.

- 7.2 The paper reviews the activities undertaken under the banner of JNCC's Terrestrial Biodiversity Surveillance Strategy. In discussion the following points were raised:
- i. there was a good level of co-ordination between the country conservation bodies and reassurance could be given that JNCC is playing a strong role in facilitating this co-ordination;
 - ii. there should be a collective UK view as to how much monitoring is necessary to meet the requirements of EU directives.
- 7.3 The Committee **agreed** option 2 (*Strategy is used to provide advice as well as setting the direction for JNCC's programme*) for the future direction of the work but suggested that it may be possible to move towards option 3 (*Strategy is used to co-ordinate surveillance investment across the UK*) in due course.

8. New environment strategies in the UK (JNCC 10 D13)

- 8.1 The paper was introduced by Mr Rose who explained that it describes a potential role for JNCC in supporting the new country environment strategies and looks at the outcome of the England Lawton Review ('Making Space for Nature') in a UK context. A complementary note setting out Dr Bridgewater's views on the Lawton Review had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.
- 8.2 The Committee **discussed** the approach to environmental protection and management being developed in different parts of the UK and the potential role for JNCC in supporting implementation of these new approaches. In discussion the following points were raised:
- i. the Lawton Review is a timely piece of work which has reached a wide audience;
 - ii. the Lawton Review encourages connectivity through ecosystem restoration and other measures that might increase provision of ecosystem services, and could be used to help develop EU thinking along similar lines;
 - iii. current systems for designating sites are not fully able to accommodate the problems of climate change, shifting habitats and invasive species;
 - iv. the relationship between protected sites and the surrounding countryside was generally now more hospitable; and
 - v. nature conservation is a devolved function, and we must not be over-ambitious in proposing UK-wide approaches.
- 8.3 The Committee **agreed** that a follow-up paper should be produced for the March 2011 meeting to include a report on the how the emerging EU and country strategies and the recommendations from the Lawton Review related to implementation of the new 2020 targets agreed in Nagoya.

9. Report from the Executive Management Board (JNCC 10 N07)

- 9.1 The Committee **noted** the report and in particular that a voluntary redundancy package would be rolled out in early 2011.

10. Any other business

- 10.1 The Committee noted the elections in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland due to take place in spring 2011 and agreed that JNCC should maintain effective consultation with the country conservation bodies during the pre-election period.