



REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

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Paper by Marcus Yeo

1. Preparing for the Spending Review

- 1.1 Over the last three months, a considerable amount of effort has continued to be directed towards preparing for the Spending Review and developing an outline for JNCC's 2011-15 corporate plan. Progress is summarised in paper JNCC 10 D10, for discussion at this Committee meeting.
- 1.2 Decreasing resources over the Spending Review period will inevitably mean that overall staff numbers in the support company will have to be reduced. It is essential that this is managed effectively to ensure that JNCC retains a staff complement with the skills and commitment to deliver future business priorities. Pre-redundancy measures have been put in place, a revised redundancy policy has been issued, and it is intended to run a voluntary redundancy programme before the end of the financial year. JNCC management has maintained close liaison with the trade unions.
- 1.3 High priority has also been given to equipping managers in JNCC with the right skills to lead the organisation through a difficult period of change. Accordingly, all senior staff will have attended a three-day management training course by the end of November, with a focus on change management and leadership.

2. Review of arms length bodies

- 2.1 On 14 October the Westminster government announced the outcome of its wide-ranging review of arms length bodies. JNCC was retained in its current form 'on grounds of impartiality'. This was very welcome news, and reflects the regard in which JNCC's work is held by Defra ministers and officials.
- 2.2 Building on the outcome of the review, Defra wish to consider whether improvements could be made to the arrangements for delivering environmental functions in the marine environment, e.g. to ensure efficient use of resources and clarity for customers. Discussions between Defra, JNCC, Natural England and other marine delivery bodies will take place over the next few months.

3. Convention on Biological Diversity

- 3.1 Two JNCC staff formed part of the UK delegation to the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP10), held in Nagoya, Japan on 18-29 October.

- 3.2 A key output from the Conference was a 10-year strategic plan for biodiversity, including a vision for 2050 and a set of strategic goals and targets for 2020. Importantly, the scope of the plan includes all the biodiversity-related conventions, not just CBD. The plan emphasises the links between biodiversity and ecosystem services, and this message was reinforced by the formal launch of the TEEB report (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) during COP10.
- 3.3 Other important decisions were taken at COP10 with respect to marine biodiversity, climate change, protected areas, and invasive alien species. A historic milestone was also reached with the adoption of a protocol for developing countries to allow access to their genetic and natural resources in return for a share of the benefits derived from their use.
- 3.4 JNCC staff will prepare a paper on the implications of COP10 for biodiversity conservation in the UK, for discussion at the March 2011 meeting of the Joint Committee.

4. Marine nature conservation

- 4.1 JNCC's marine work comprises several inter-related projects that support UK Government and devolved administrations in meeting their national, EU and international commitments. As part of the process of planning ahead for the Spending Review, we have looked across the various strands of work to map out the likely shape of JNCC's marine programmes over the next four years. We are using this as a basis for discussions with government funders on priorities and resource requirements, while acknowledging that several areas of uncertainty remain unresolved.
- 4.2 The identification of a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) in UK waters remains a high priority for UK Government and devolved administrations, and JNCC staff are continuing to make a major contribution to this work, in partnership with other organisations. In relation to Habitats Directive requirements, consultation on Dogger Bank possible Special Area of Conservation (SAC) closed on 12 November, and a report will be considered by the Joint Committee's MPA sub-group on 17 December. Meetings have been held with a range of stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, windfarm developers, representatives of the fishing industry and Crown Estate. It is intended to submit the post-consultation documentation to Defra in January.
- 4.3 The Marine Strategy Framework Directive gives EU Member States major new obligations, and Defra is paying increasing attention to the challenge of implementing the Directive in UK waters. Defra have asked JNCC to take the lead on biodiversity-related elements of Directive. This will involve regional delivery through the OSPAR Convention (in the NE Atlantic) and additional UK-level requirements. The focus to 2012 will be on technical aspects of Good Environmental Status, including development of targets and indicators, integrated assessment processes (for MSFD and other policy obligations, such as the Habitats and Birds Directives, OSPAR and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan) and monitoring programmes. JNCC will need to put additional resources into this area of work, and we have factored this into the corporate planning process.