



## **STREAMLINING JOINT COMMITTEE AND BOARD ARRANGEMENTS**

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## JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

### STREAMLINING JOINT COMMITTEE AND BOARD ARRANGEMENTS

#### Paper by Sue McQueen and Tracey Quince

1. In March, Committee asked for consideration to be given to what changes might be made to the way that its business is dealt with to make the best use of members' time and to reduce cash and environmental costs.
2. In Annex 1 a range of ideas are set out, generated from a short brainstorming session, to stimulate discussion about how radical Committee feels the changes should be. Based on the discussion, detailed proposals will be developed and brought back to Committee in September.
3. JNCC is obliged to set and meet high standards of corporate governance but has powers under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to determine its own procedures.
4. The Committee has reviewed its role and performance during the last eighteen months as follows (further details are provided in Annex 2):
  - i. in December 2008 (JNCC 08 P15), Committee reviewed its role and agreed a framework to improve the focus of its attention. Further delegations were made in line with the framework;
  - ii. in December 2009 (JNCC 09 D09), Committee used a Treasury model<sup>1</sup> to assess its performance against best practice. Relevant findings from the self-assessment have been taken into account in developing the range of options for possible future change.
5. The current cost of supporting Joint Committee, Company Board and non-executive sub-groups is anticipated to be approximately £18,000 in direct costs and £26,000 in staff costs for 2010/11<sup>2</sup>. The amount of time for members and regular attendees to participate in meetings, including travel, is estimated at 153 days. These figures will be used as baselines to compare against the models that will be brought back to Committee in September.

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<sup>1</sup> HM Treasury, 2004. *Building effective boards: Enhancing the Effectiveness of Independent Boards in executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies*. HMSO.

<sup>2</sup> These figures exclude remuneration and expenses for members appointed by the country conservation bodies and remuneration for independent Committee members. They also exclude the cost of planning and authoring papers for Chief Scientists and other groups prior to consideration by Committee.

**Annex 1. Initial ideas for revising the way in which the Committee and Company Board conduct their business**

Option for change	Detailed arrangements	Savings	Risks
1. Hold all meetings in Peterborough		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time (JNCC and host-agency) associated with holding summer meeting away from Peterborough.</li> <li>• Cost of hiring external facilities.</li> <li>• Travel time and accommodation costs for Committee members and staff would vary depending on location but likely to be a net saving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No major risks.</li> </ul>
2. Increase use of electronic communications, e.g. video conferencing and emailing papers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JNCC administration and stationery/ postage re electronic papers.</li> <li>• Members' time re video-conferencing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to manage multi-way video-conferencing. Technical problems frequently encountered.</li> </ul>
3. Reduce number of Company Board meetings to one per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance reporting:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– to Committee intersessionally on a quarterly basis;</li> <li>– to ARMC on issues and their management on a quarterly basis.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• EMB and ARMC reports:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– to Members (in relevant capacity) intersessionally</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly staff time associated with administration and minuting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No major risks</li> </ul>

Option for change	Detailed arrangements	Savings	Risks
	<p>on a quarterly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other items:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– delegated to EMB and escalated to other Board members by correspondence if necessary.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<p><b>4.</b> Delegate routine business to a sub-Committee (General Committee) that meets four times a year and which comprises all Committee members except country conservation body Chairs. Hold one full Committee meeting per year on strategy prior to a General Committee meeting instead of a field visit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal change from present arrangements re formal meetings except Chairs of country conservation bodies don't attend any meetings other than a strategy session once a year.</li> <li>• JNCC Chair and Managing Director would meet country conservation bodies' Boards/Councils annually and Chair would maintain regular contact with country conservation bodies Chairs to ensure good levels of understanding are maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of field visit.</li> <li>• Country conservation body Chairs' time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-tier membership.</li> <li>• Composition of decision-making body for the majority of business outside the spirit of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.</b> Reduce Committee meetings to three per year and hold an annual strategy workshop in association with one of the meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full range of business currently reserved for Committee compressed into three longer meetings.</li> <li>• Membership stays as at present. Country conservation body Chairs decide which</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of one meeting per year and field visit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of meetings may not be sufficient to allow timely decision-making.</li> <li>• Could create two-tier membership (depending on decisions made by Chairs on attendance at meetings).</li> </ul>

Option for change	Detailed arrangements	Savings	Risks
	<p>routine meetings they attend.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could mean the composition of decision-making body for the majority of business outside the spirit of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6.</b> Reduce Committee meetings to two per year focussing on strategy. Delegate other business to the Executive Management Board and other sub-groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed arrangements need working up but options could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– delegating non-contentious issues to EMB, subject to agreement with e.g. chief executives of country conservation bodies;</li> <li>– delegating other issues to standing, or time-limited, sub-groups of Committee comprising relevant mix of members (e.g. international matters to independent members with appropriate expertise). This would require a general delegation to JNCC Chair to form time-limited sub-groups on behalf of Committee.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly savings in Committee member's time as not everyone needs to be involved in everything.</li> <li>• Cost of field visit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of meetings could be insufficient to allow Committee to gel as a group.</li> <li>• Arrangements would require a high level of trust in EMB, JNCC Chair and between members that issues are dealt with appropriately.</li> <li>• Possible challenge to legitimacy of highly controversial decisions if all Committee members not involved.</li> </ul>

<b>Option for change</b>	<b>Detailed arrangements</b>	<b>Savings</b>	<b>Risks</b>
7. Reduce Committee meetings to two per year focussing on strategy. Deal with other business by correspondence and sub-groups as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Similar to option 6 but some decisions taken by correspondence rather than sub-groups.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As for option 6.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As for option 6 but highly controversial decisions could be confirmed by all members by correspondence.</li></ul>

**Annex 2. Previous Committee decisions regarding its role**

**A. Framework for future Committee business ( from JNCC paper 08 P15, December 2008)**

Broad category	Type of item
Strategies for JNCC's work or collaborative work with and between the UK conservation bodies	Agreeing future priorities and/or arrangements for implementation
	Discussing implications of evidence/intelligence
	Identifying work that requires collaboration/delivery by the country conservation agencies and agreeing high-level principles for how this should be done
Advice on the development or implementation of policy/ legislation, which is potentially high-risk or highly beneficial for UK Government, devolved administrations or JNCC	High-level approach/position for a policy sector, across all geographical scales
	Advice on specific items of policy or legislation
	Recommendations for protected sites
New thinking and approaches for or affecting nature conservation	Strategic discussions on emerging issues
Governance matters	Agreeing corporate priorities
	Discussing implications for JNCC of political changes
	Fulfilling governance obligations e.g. approving changes to the governance framework

**B. Relevant findings from the review of Joint Committee effectiveness (from JNCC paper 09 D09, December 2009)**

**1. High performing aspects of Committee**

- i. Provides an effective forum in bringing together views and opinions from the four countries and independent views in decision-taking;
- ii. Open and constructive discussion;
- iii. Effective and productive meetings and efficient organisation;
- iv. Transparency.

**2. Areas for development:**

- i. Clarifying objectives for Committee (not JNCC as a whole);
- ii. Scope for greater delegation;
- iii. Ensuring the programme of company board meetings is proportionate to business needs;
- iv. Providing opportunities for different types of members to discuss their views and contributions to Committee business collectively;
- v. Increasing members knowledge of support company staff and operations.