



JNCC CORPORATE PLAN 2011-15

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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

JNCC CORPORATE PLAN 2011-15

Paper by Sue McQueen and Marcus Yeo

1. Status of JNCC and its member bodies

- 1.1 The Cabinet Office review of Arms Length Bodies concluded that JNCC should be retained on grounds of impartiality. No change in JNCC's role or functions was proposed. Natural England was reviewed under the same exercise and is to be "retained and substantially reformed ... through structural, process and cultural change to become a more efficient and customer focused organisation ...".
- 1.2 Further review of Defra's marine delivery landscape is likely to be undertaken over the next few months.
- 1.3 The Welsh Assembly Government is continuing to review options for the future of environmental delivery in Wales, which may lead to changes to the roles of CCW, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission.

2. Outcome of the Spending Review

- 2.1 As part of the Spending Review announced on 20 October Defra's financial settlement will be reduced by 30% in real terms (24% cash) by 2015. Internal discussions are underway within Defra to determine how the budget will be allocated.
- 2.2 Cuts to the budgets of the devolved administrations over the Spending Review period are lower than the average for Whitehall departments. At the time of writing this paper, only limited information is available on the implications for the country conservation bodies but there seem to be differences in approach between different parts of the UK.

3. Government priorities

- 3.1 Defra's Business Plan for 2011-15 was published in November. It sets out three priorities for the Department:
 - i. support and develop British farming and encourage sustainable food production;
 - ii. help to enhance the environment and biodiversity to improve quality of life;
 - iii. support a strong and sustainable green economy, resilient to climate change.

- 3.2 Under these priorities there are several actions relevant to JNCC, including identifying Marine Conservation Zones, agreeing a new EU biodiversity strategy, influencing reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, and publishing a guide for policy makers on valuing nature.
- 3.3 Business Plans for some other Whitehall departments also include actions relevant to JNCC. For example, FCO have made a commitment to develop a new strategy for the Overseas Territories.
- 3.4 At the time of writing this paper, little detail is available on the environmental priorities of the devolved administrations for the Spending Review period.

4. Current JNCC position

- 4.1 JNCC submitted proposals for reducing expenditure over the Spending Review period to Defra and the devolved administrations in June. To date we have received no substantive feedback on the submission or on JNCC's future funding.
- 4.2 JNCC staff have continued to refine plans and to profile expenditure for each work stream over the Spending Review period. Particular effort has been focused on identifying provisional priorities and resource requirements for JNCC's work on marine nature conservation. This preparatory work should enable us to respond very quickly once JNCC's financial settlement has been agreed to produce a corporate plan and begin to implement it.
- 4.3 Provisional plans for how we would respond to reductions in each of JNCC's grant in aid funding streams are set out below.

4.4 UK co-ordination

- 4.4.1 The UK co-ordination funding stream supports UK-level work on evidence, advice, co-ordination and standards. Funding is provided jointly by Defra and the devolved administrations. The 2010/11 budget is £5.697 million.
- 4.4.2 We have profiled a cut of approximately 20% (cash) in UK co-ordination funding by 2014/15. Reductions are fairly evenly profiled over the four years except for a small peak in expenditure in 2012/13 (associated with marine commitments).
- 4.4.3 Funding at this level would allow the core elements of JNCC's surveillance, evidence and information work to be maintained. However, reductions would have to be made in the following areas (as set out in the June submission to government):
 - i. European intelligence;
 - ii. geoconservation;
 - iii. UK-wide technical advice on nature conservation and co-ordination of country conservation bodies' activities (largely delivered through inter-agency groups);

- iv. non-essential common standards;
- v. support for Recorder software;
- vi. identification of inshore SPAs;
- vii. back-office functions.

4.4.4 We have already started to make some of these reductions, as agreed by Committee in September. Discussions are ongoing in the Chief Scientists Group about residual priorities and transitional arrangements, bearing in mind the concerns expressed at the September Committee meeting.

4.4.5 Assumptions have been made about future Peterborough office accommodation (location, costs, timing) to produce the profile but there is significant uncertainty about these matters.

4.4.6 Cuts of 30% in the UK co-ordination budget are only possible if biodiversity surveillance is reduced which carries significantly increased risks of not being able to meet EU and other reporting obligations.

4.5 Core reserved

4.5.1 The reserved funding stream is provided by Defra and supports international and some elements of offshore marine work. The 2010/11 budget is £1.778 million.

4.5.2 Cuts of around 15% have been profiled. These would be achieved by the following measures:

- i. reducing support for multilateral environmental agreements (while protecting the highest priorities for ongoing advice, such as Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species);
- ii. reducing support for the Government's strategy for biodiversity conservation in the Overseas Territories.

4.5.3 In the June submission to Government it was suggested that we would stop work on the UK's global impacts. However, we have provisionally decided to maintain targeted support for this work, as it seems to coincide with developing government priorities.

4.5.4 The completion of planned work to identify marine SACs will free up some resources but this will be more than counterbalanced by increased demand for advice on management for marine protected areas and the wider marine environment.

4.5.5 Cuts of up to 25% in the reserved funding stream could be achieved by modest reallocation of responsibilities within Defra for funding certain areas of marine work (e.g. Marine Strategy Framework Directive). This would still allow Defra to achieve a reduction of 20% or more in their total contribution to JNCC (across the three funding

streams). If this is not possible, then cuts to high-priority marine or international work would be required.

4.6 Marine reserved

- 4.6.1 Marine reserved funding is provided by Defra's marine directorate to identify Marine Conservation Zones and develop a biodiversity surveillance programme. The 2010/11 budget is £3.231 million.
- 4.6.2 Profiling expenditure in this area is complicated by uncertainty over how an operational marine biodiversity monitoring programme (post-2012) will be taken forward. JNCC is currently undertaking the research and development phase but the cost of implementation is projected to be several million pounds per year because of high vessel costs. This could be substantially reduced if vessels across the Defra family and devolved administrations were to be used on the basis of a 'national asset', and discussions are underway to try to achieve this.
- 4.6.3 Because of the uncertainty and potential scale of costs of implementing a surveillance programme, this has been so far excluded from the profiling. On this basis, we can achieve cuts well in excess of 30% by 2014/15 (even allowing for the reallocation of funding noted in 4.5.5 above) as the identification of MPAs and the research and development phase of the surveillance work will have been completed. However, there would be a large peak in expenditure in 2011/12 and 2012/13 as several large pieces of work coincide during that period.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 Defra officials have indicated that they are aiming to reach provisional agreement on JNCC's financial settlement in December. A JNCC Sponsors' Group meeting has been arranged for 8 December, which will be a key opportunity for the UK co-ordination funding to be decided.
- 5.2 We have no information at present about the required format for the corporate plan except that it will need to cover the full Spending Review period. We propose to keep the plan at a high level with a fairly small number of objectives for the full period and associated milestones to assess progress towards them. The provisional shape of the plan is set out in Annex 1.

Annex 1. Provisional shape of JNCC corporate plan for 2011-15

1. Mission

JNCC provides evidence, information and advice to assist the UK government and devolved administrations in developing and implementing coherent domestic and international policies on the protection of natural resources as an integral part of sustainable development. Our specific role is to work on nature conservation issues that affect the UK as a whole and internationally.

2. Strategic objectives

For 2011-15, our work will be guided by three inter-related strategic objectives:

- i. contributing the development of the UK, EU and global evidence base for biodiversity;
- ii. providing advice on international nature conservation and acting as an informed link between national, European and global institutions and processes;
- iii. advising on marine nature conservation in the UK's offshore waters and on UK-wide issues.

To achieve these strategic objectives, the broad direction of our work is set out below.

2.1 Evidence

2.1.1 Maintain and develop terrestrial biodiversity surveillance programmes and provide enhanced access to information and evidence sufficient to:

- i. meet European obligations;
- ii. support European and global decisions via new science policy interfaces such as the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES);
- iii. achieve more efficient, integrated outcome-oriented reporting, including the development and publication of indicators;
- iv. support the implementation of country environment/biodiversity strategies within the UK;
- v. address emerging approaches and requirements, including:
 - taking an ecosystem approach to nature conservation;
 - recognising the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services as a means of broadening financing mechanisms, involving more sectors in delivery (mainstreaming), increasing awareness and achieving sustainable development;
 - enabling delivery at multiple scales.

2.1.2 Maintain essential UK-wide standards and conservation approaches necessary to meet UK, EU and international obligations, including standards related to surveillance, monitoring, reporting, and maintaining the coherence of site networks.

2.2 International

- 2.2.1 Support Government's international goals and obligations through advice on priority Multilateral Environmental Agreements. These are expected to include the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, with less input to the Convention on Migratory Species and others. If given the necessary mandate, we will support development of a strategic UK approach to international biodiversity issues.
- 2.2.2 Subject to the global footprint goals of Defra and the devolved administrations (developing under country strategies), build on the investment already made to provide, where feasible, UK footprint data to country level to support distinct country needs and localism agenda.
- 2.2.3 Support implementation of the UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy.
- 2.2.4 Support the European objectives of Defra and the devolved administrations:
 - i. provide evidence and advice on the development and implementation of EU policies and legislation, e.g. agreeing a new EU biodiversity strategy (post-Nagoya);
 - ii. maintain and update a tracking mechanism for EU initiatives affecting nature conservation to enable JNCC and the country conservation bodies to provide timely advice to government on agreed priorities.

2.3 Marine

- 2.3.1 Provide scientific information and advice to:
 - i. enable the UK Government and devolved administrations to complete designation of a UK network of marine protected areas, sufficient to meet national, EU and international requirements;
 - ii. meet the increased demand for advice on management of offshore marine protected areas as more designations are put in place.
- 2.3.2 Assist regulators in meeting their environmental responsibilities in relation to offshore oil and gas, aggregate extraction and renewable energy, and provide policy-relevant advice to governments in relation to these industries, fisheries and shipping.
- 2.3.3 Deliver the evidence needed to inform marine nature conservation policy and practice, including:
 - i. providing options to governments for an operational marine biodiversity monitoring programme for all UK waters;
 - ii. without pre-judging the outcome of government decisions, be prepared to co-ordinate implementation of a UK marine biodiversity monitoring programme and participate in the habitats and species elements¹;

¹ Currently excluded from resource profiles

- iii. maintain and develop habitat and pressure/sensitivity maps for statutory purposes and to fulfil the requirements of EU Directives.
- 2.3.4 Support implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) at UK and European levels, including through the OSPAR Convention:
- i. support Government in securing cost-effective long-term assessment and monitoring processes and a well targeted programme of measures to achieve Good Environmental Status;
 - ii. undertake integrated assessments of the state of the marine environment, its species, habitats and protected sites, as required for MSFD and other purposes.

2.4 Efficiency

- 2.4.1 We will continue to make efficiencies in the delivery of our work in order to maximise the resources going to our front-line services including:
- i. sharing or outsourcing facilities, services and procurement of goods and services where it is economical to do so;
 - ii. reducing quantity and improving quality in respect of management and administration structures and processes;
 - iii. increasing automation and making greater use of electronic communications tools.