



**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 24 MARCH 2011 AT
MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY**

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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

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Present

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

In attendance

Dr Goold
Mr Hill (representing Mr Wood)
Mr Jardine
Mrs McQueen
Mrs Quince (Secretary)
Mr Rose
Mr Seymour
Mr Yeo

Apologies: Dr Brown, Mr Thin (Members) and Ms Davies and Ms Phillips (Attendees).

1. Chairman's opening remarks

- 1.1 Dr Bridgewater welcomed everyone to the eighty-ninth meeting of the JNCC.
- 1.2 Dr Bridgewater congratulated Helen Baker and colleagues for an excellent presentation on futures work the evening before.
- 1.3 A strategy workshop with staff and Committee members would be held directly following the Board meeting which would lay the foundations for the strategy session to take place at the June meeting.
- 1.4 Dr Bridgewater reminded members that from 1 April the Committee would move to its new streamlined arrangements with three meetings a year instead of four. The Committee were mindful of the May elections taking place in the devolved administrations but agreed that the June meeting should be held in Northern Ireland as planned.
- 1.5 Dr Bridgewater informed members that he had met with the Defra minister, Richard Benyon, since the last Committee meeting and had received positive feedback on JNCC's work. The review of arms-length bodies had helped to raise the profile of JNCC.
- 1.6 Dr Bridgewater noted that this would be Professor Hill's last meeting. He thanked Professor Hill on behalf of the Committee for his hard work and efforts and wished him well.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 In relation to agenda item 5, Mr Pritchard declared that he was shortly to be contracted by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide consultancy support to them. Dr Bridgewater ruled that this did not represent a conflict of interest.

3. Amendments to the minutes of the December 2010 meeting

- 3.1 The minutes were agreed.

4. Matters arising (JNCC 11 P03)

- 4.1 Members noted the paper.

5. Implementing the outcomes of Nagoya (JNCC 11 D02)

- 5.1 The paper was introduced by Mr Rose who explained that it summarised the outcomes from the Convention on Biological Diversity conference in Nagoya in 2010 and puts them in the context of the emerging country and Overseas Territories environment strategies and the recommendations of the Lawton Review. The paper also maps out the UK role JNCC might undertake to support the Four Countries Biodiversity Group which will probably be taking on a more formal role.

- 5.2 The Committee discussed the elements of a UK role necessary to provide the appropriate level of two-way integration between the country, Overseas Territory and international/European biodiversity strategies (section 5 of the paper) and the nature of the UK-scale framework required to guide the UK biodiversity co-ordination role (section 6 of the paper).

- 5.3 In discussion the following issues were raised:

- i. the Committee supported the UK role and UK-scale activities proposed in the paper. The important roles in looking at common approaches across devolved administrations, disseminating best practice and facilitating access to data were emphasised. It was recognised that ideas and approaches might be similar but ways of implementing them could differ in different parts of the UK;
- ii. there may be a missing component of work around the functional aspects of the UK role such as the conservation of migratory species and some elements of protected area networks;
- iii. the proposed arrangements build on the existing Four Countries Biodiversity Group to provide governance for the UK role, but this group does not include the country conservation agencies. This point needs to be addressed as the discussions on governance proceed;
- iv. care needs to be taken when referring to the mechanisms in devolved administrations as some are frameworks, others strategies;
- v. the recommendations of the Lawton review are not common currency in all parts of the UK. Maintaining links to the National Ecosystem

Assessment and any follow up process was important when looking at implementation of the various devolved strategies and frameworks;

- vi. it was important to remain 'plugged in' to what is happening in Europe and internationally, particularly with the European Commission's work on green infrastructure;
- vii. this work offers an exciting opportunity to showcase what the UK is doing and longer term offers the opportunity of sharing of intellectual effort and endeavor.

5.4 The next steps should be:

- i. to develop more detailed planning with country conservation colleagues. It was noted that a rethink in some areas might be required and that finding a process to achieve the collective aspirations of the country strategies and frameworks will require looking to new stakeholders such as those in the business sector and alignment with new policies and political positions;
- ii. to co-ordinate and facilitate the dissemination of best practice.

5.5 The Committee **agreed** that further ideas on what a UK approach might entail would be developed through the Chief Scientists Group and a paper presented at the June Committee meeting.

6. Business plan for 2011/12 (JNCC 11 P04)

6.1 The paper was introduced by Mr Yeo who advised members that confirmation of Northern Ireland's financial contribution for 2011/12 had been received prior to the meeting. The settlement for 2011/12 was seen as good given the current economic climate. The plan represents a 5-6% cut in core work but includes a significant increase in Defra funding for some marine work. Consultation on the draft business plan had been undertaken with the majority of key stakeholders and their comments included in the draft. Defra's Supervisory Board will monitor JNCC's performance against five or six priority outputs, and the Committee should decide which outputs are used for this purpose. Mr Yeo proposed that a revised final draft of the business plan was formally signed off by Chairman and a small sub-group of Committee members within the next two weeks. The plan would then be sent to ministers for final endorsement. It was noted that elections in the devolved administrations might delay sign-off of the plan but this was not perceived to be a problem.

6.2 In discussion the following points were raised in relation to the text, content and presentation of the plan:

- i. the plan was clear and concise and was a good model for others to use;
- ii. in objective 2 (para 2.5), the word 'biodiversity' in the first line to be changed to 'environment';
- iii. objective 6 could say more about the role of the Committee in developing strategic approaches;

- iv. more detail could be provided in the plan on work undertaken in the Overseas Territories.

6.3 In discussion the following general points were raised:

- i. whilst the financial settlement for 2011/12 was good it was important to continue to review work areas to deliver efficiencies and savings;
- ii. there was a need for increased transparency to show how funds from the different administrations were being used. A robust performance reporting framework was essential;
- iii. additional resources in the marine area would mean greater external focus on JNCC at a time of spending cuts and reduced staffing in other organisations. In the coming months, the marine area had very challenging targets to meet. There may be problems in recruiting experienced marine staff. Pressure for JNCC to deliver across all work programmes would increase and with it increased risks to reputation;
- iv. whilst funding was only currently agreed for one year, a longer term view was essential to meet planning needs and to manage the staff complement;
- v. whilst staff had remained focussed over the last few months and had achieved a great deal, there was a risk that staff morale could be affected as JNCC shifts its activities to the marine area and cuts back on more traditional areas of work.

6.4 The Committee **endorsed** the advanced draft business plan for 2011/12, subject to the amendments in 6.2 above and final revision of resource tables. A final draft would be produced for the Chairman and sub-group to formally sign-off before submission to ministers. The sub-group would also select the priority outputs for Defra's Supervisory Board to monitor performance against.

7. Governance responsibilities from April 2011 (JNCC 11 P02)

7.1 The paper was introduced by Mrs McQueen who explained that changes to governance arrangements had arisen from the clear line of sight initiative (CLOS) and the Committee's decision to streamline its current arrangements. She explained that the primary purpose in revising the documents at this time was to reflect these changes, with a more substantial revision of the documents to take place later in the year when new guidance and governance templates are issued by the Cabinet Office and Treasury. Mrs McQueen confirmed that all devolved administrations were content with the changes.

7.2 In discussion the following point was raised:

- i. transfer of the Accounting Officer role from Natural England's Chief Executive to Mr Yeo was eminently sensible.

7.3 Dr Bridgewater confirmed that paragraph 4.4.2 of the management statement did not mean that JNCC would be subject to political interference. He re-

affirmed that JNCC operates within the political framework set by ministers and the Chair is responsible to the Secretary of State. The Partnership Agreement clearly sets out this role and should be read in conjunction with this paragraph for clarity of meaning.

7.4 The Committee **endorsed**:

- i. the revised JNCC management statement and financial memorandum and accountability framework document (Appendix 1);
- ii. the schedule of delegations Part 1 (Appendix 2);
- iii. the terms of reference for the Remuneration Committee (Appendix 3); and
- iv. the standing orders for the Joint Committee (Appendix 4).

7.5 The Committee **noted** the draft terms of reference for the Chief Scientists Group (Appendix 5).

8. Report of marine Protected Areas Sub-Group (JNCC 11 N01)

8.1 The Committee **noted** the report and expressed its appreciation to the Sub-Group for the important role it plays.

9. Report from Executive Management Board (JNCC 11 N02)

9.1 The Committee **noted** the report and expressed its disappointment that management had not been able to make use of the voluntary redundancy scheme.

10. Any other business

10.1 Nothing further was discussed.

Closed session

11. Marine arms-length bodies review (in confidence) (JNCC 11 D01)

11.1 The minutes for this item are contained in a confidential addendum.