



**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE NINETY-FIRST MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2011 AT
MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY**

This paper was provided to the Joint Committee for decision/discussion
or information. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for
Committee's position on the paper.

To view other Joint Committee papers and minutes visit <http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2671>

To find out more about JNCC visit <http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1729>

JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE NINETY-FIRST MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2011 AT MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY

Present:

Mr Archdale
Dr Bridgewater
Dr Brown
Mr Casement
Mr Christensen
Mr Crawley
Mr Duke
Dr Gubbay (representing CCW)
Mr Pritchard
Professor Warren

In attendance:

Dr Gibson
Dr Goold
Mrs McQueen
Professor Platt (representing NIEA)
Mr Rose
Ms Davies
Mr Yeo

Apologies:

Members: Professor Hill, Dr Joyce, Mr Parry, Mr Thin, Judith Webb

Attendees: Mr Jardine, Mr Seymour

1. Chairman's opening remarks

- 1.1 Dr Bridgewater welcomed everyone to the ninety-first meeting of the JNCC and thanked Professor Bill Sutherland of Cambridge University for his excellent presentation the previous evening.
- 1.2 Dr Gibson was welcomed to the meeting for the first time in his capacity as JNCC's Director of Marine Evidence.
- 1.3 Dr Bridgewater reported that he had met the Scottish Environment Minister and had exchanged ideas on future developments and priorities. A meeting with the Northern Ireland Environment Minister has been rescheduled for early December. Dr Bridgewater noted the strong support for JNCC's work from the devolved administrations.
- 1.4 Dr Bridgewater reported on the outcome of a meeting with UK NGOs, also attended by Mr Yeo and Mr Rose. A decision to meet with the NGOs on a six-monthly basis was agreed at this meeting.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 Professor Warren declared her appointment to Defra's Science Advisory Council and her advice to the Environment Agency on Pembroke Power Station. These were not considered to present a conflict of interest.

3. Minutes of the June 2011 meeting

3.1 The minutes were agreed.

4. Matters arising (JNCC 11 P08)

4.1 Committee noted the paper which deals with points not covered by substantive items on the agenda.

4.2 The MPA Sub-group reported that a statement detailing the revised timetable for the designation of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) had been issued by the Defra Environment Minister Richard Benyon. Mr Christensen and Mr Yeo noted that the formal advice from JNCC and Natural England would now be delivered in July 2012. The extension to the timetable will allow further work on the evidence base underpinning site proposals, and is endorsed by both JNCC and Natural England.

4.3 Dr Gibson noted that JNCC will extend the timetable for development of options for marine monitoring by six to twelve months as a consequence of moving some monitoring staff to the revised MCZ work, and continued vacancies in the monitoring programme.

4.4 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. the socio-economic challenges of site selection. It was agreed that the group would focus on the science and ecological aspects. Dr Goold confirmed that Defra would undertake a review of the socio-economic data.
- ii. the concern that European standards are being applied to the sites. Dr Bridgewater agreed to revisit this issue intersessionally, following his meeting with Minister Benyon.

4.5 Dr Bridgewater confirmed Committee's support for the work of the MPA Sub-group.

4.6 Issues around site selection were explored further. The minutes for this item are contained in a confidential addendum.

5. Corporate Plan (JNCC11 D06)

5.1 Committee discussed the paper outlining JNCC's Corporate Plan for the next three years.

5.2 Mr Yeo highlighted the difficult decisions to be made about priorities to accommodate the anticipated budget reductions over the coming years. This was particularly acute in the UK coordination funding stream areas because the profiled reduction for the next three years follows a reduction of 23% in real terms over the previous five years. Work would be prioritised further using the criteria in section 5 of the paper and would be discussed with the nature conservation bodies and government administrations in the new year.

- 5.3 Mr Yeo highlighted further considerations for JNCC's marine work:
- i. the potential gap between what is required to fully meet marine obligations and the current level of resource. Discussions with Defra Marine about future funding were ongoing;
 - ii. the current plans would require recruitment of additional staff over the next few years and plans were being refined further to ensure growth would be both manageable and realistic.

5.4 The following points were made in discussion:

- i. all areas of work should be risk assessed to establish which areas may be dropped or reduced. However, there would be challenges for the country conservation bodies in managing the implications of work that is dropped;
- ii. prioritisation of marine work was particularly important to ensure it does not adversely impact the delivery of UK terrestrial and freshwater work;
- iii. the principle of funding all Governance and Corporate Services work from UK coordination has resulted in a disproportionate level of spend by the devolved administrations on this area. Review of funding arrangements as part of the Triennial Review was essential;
- iv. priority performance measures need to be more specific;
- v. clarity over future staff numbers by programme is needed.

5.5 The Committee agreed:

- i. to form a sub-group to guide further development of the plan prior to a final version being submitted in March. Dr Brown, Mr Duke and Mr Crawley were nominated and the remaining country conservation bodies were asked to notify Mr Yeo of their nominees;
- ii. the Audit and Risk Management Committee should look at the projected costs for Governance and Corporate Services.

6. Evidence standards, management and collaboration (JNCC 11 D07)

- 6.1 Committee discussed the paper which outlines work on evidence standards and management being undertaken by JNCC and the Chief Scientists Group.
- 6.2 Dr Tim Hill gave a presentation on Natural England's work on evidence standards and how they were developed, emphasising the requirement for a consistent and auditable approach.
- 6.3 In relation to future approaches the following points were raised in discussion:
- i. the importance of quality assurance, peer review and the use of expert opinion;
 - ii. the relation between evidence standards and Common Standards Monitoring;

- iii. the importance of Audit and Risk Management Committee involvement with this issue;
- iv. the inclusion of ecosystem services in this approach;
- v. the different precedents for marine and terrestrial work.

7. Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Oral update)

7.1 Mr Rose updated the Committee on the latest developments, reporting that a meeting in April 2012 will establish the platform and develop the governance structure and rules of procedure. Intersessional work will be required and Committee will be updated in March 2012.

7.2 Dr Bridgewater confirmed Defra's request for JNCC to take the lead in the UK role.

8. Any other business

8.1 The issue of Milford Haven SAC and the appropriate assessment and consenting of various elements of the Pembroke Power Station was raised. It was confirmed that the Environment Agency have consented the operation. Committee agreed to review an information paper on the site at the March 2012 meeting.

9. UK Biodiversity Framework (in confidence) (JNCC D05)

9.1 The minutes of this item are contained in a confidential addendum.

10. Harbour Porpoise and Skerries & Causeway (in confidence) (JNCC P09)

10.1 The minutes of this item are contained in a confidential addendum.