



Chief Executive's report on topical issues

November 2013

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Chief Executive's report on topical issues

Paper by Marcus Yeo

1. Triennial Review follow-up

- 1.1. Following the publication of JNCC's Triennial Review in June, an implementation plan was prepared. The plan was endorsed by the Executive Management Board and JNCC Chair, and was circulated to Committee members in August.
- 1.2. Good progress has been made in implementing the plan, and a summary is provided to this meeting as paper JNCC13 D09. Separate papers deal with the proposed delegation to Natural England of advice on renewables in offshore English waters (JNCC13 P17) and the review of JNCC's funding arrangements (JNCC13 P18).

2. Quarter 2 performance report

- 2.1. JNCC's performance report for quarter 2 of 2013/14 was circulated to company board members on 30 October. The report shows a generally positive picture.
- 2.2. At the end of September, all 25 priority performance measures for 2013/14 were rated either Green (fully on track) or Amber/Green (broadly on track but with some aspects that require attention). However, work programmes for the last two quarters of the year remain demanding, and there are risks of excessive stretch in some parts of JNCC.
- 2.3. The financial forecast for the year indicates a projected underspend of £101k on Marine grant in aid (GIA), and projected overspends in UK Coordination GIA of £94k and Reserved GIA of £9k. The net result is a projected overspend of just £2k.

3. Pay award for 2013/14

- 3.1. JNCC staff have been subject to a pay freeze for the past two years, in line with government policy. For 2013/14, Treasury guidance on public sector pay restricts JNCC to an average per capita pay increase of 1%. As a consequence it has not been possible to consider any major changes to the pay structure.
- 3.2. JNCC management worked up proposals for a 2013/14 pay offer, with a focus on providing a consolidated pay increase for staff with over 12 months service. The proposals were endorsed by the Remuneration Committee and subsequently by Defra. Further details are available on request.

- 3.3. The Trade Unions within JNCC formally rejected the pay offer because of their opposition to what they consider to be unjustified public sector pay restraint.
- 3.4. The pay award for 2013/14 (effective from 1 August 2013) has now been implemented.

4. Defra's Strategic Alignment programme

- 4.1. JNCC staff are continuing to input to Defra's ambitious Strategic Alignment programme, which is intended to get the Defra network (i.e. core department and all arm's length bodies) to operate as "one business" and to achieve substantial cost savings. Our approach is to contribute positively to the development of options where appropriate and to ensure that JNCC's UK-wide remit is not compromised by involvement in initiatives with an English focus.
- 4.2. Within the corporate services workstream we are keeping a watching brief on developments, and intend to engage with particular work areas where there are demonstrable benefits for JNCC.
- 4.3. JNCC staff are making a significant input to the evidence workstream (e.g. through the part-time secondment of two staff to the Defra team leading the work) because of the importance of this topic to JNCC. Work is ongoing to define network-wide evidence priorities, agree how evidence will be commissioned in future, and agree new ways of working across the network.

5. UK report on implementation of the Birds Directive

- 5.1. Preliminary results for the tenth UK report on implementation of the Birds Directive were endorsed intersessionally by the Joint Committee in October. The results include some interesting data on population trends within Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in comparison to national trends.
- 5.2. For the majority of species for which SPAs are designated the trend in SPAs follows the national trend. However, 22 species are increasing or stable in SPAs but decreasing nationally, whereas 18 species are increasing or stable nationally but decreasing in SPAs. This may reflect the fact that SPAs are more effective for some species than others.
- 5.3. Points relating to the effectiveness of SPAs may be picked up in discussion on the paper on protected areas presented to this meeting (JNCC13 D08).

6. Ministerial meetings

- 6.1. Following the UK Government ministerial reshuffle in October, Lord de Mauley has assumed ministerial responsibility for JNCC within Defra. JNCC's work will also be relevant to George Eustice, who has responsibility for the marine environment. The JNCC Chair and Chief Executive will meet Lord de Mauley on 12 November.
- 6.2. On 21 October, the JNCC Chair had a fruitful meeting with Alun Davies, Minister for Natural Resources and Food in the Welsh Government.

7. Appointment of new JNCC Chair

- 7.1. The appointment process for a new JNCC Chair has begun, with advertisements being placed on various websites. The new Chair will be formally appointed on 1 June 2014.