

**JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

**UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE EIGHTY SECOND MEETING OF THE  
JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY  
22 JUNE 2009 AT MARINERS HOTEL, HAVERFORDWEST**

**Present:**

Mr Archdale  
Dr Bridgewater  
Mr Casement  
Mr Christensen  
Mr Crawley  
Dr Joyce  
Mr Lloyd Jones  
Mr Pritchard  
Professor Usher  
Professor Warren  
Judith Webb (except for items 1-4 and 9)

**In attendance:**

Dr Goold  
Mrs McQueen  
Mr Seymour  
Mr Steer  
Dr Stott  
Dr Tew (except for items 1-4 and 9)  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Yeo

**Apologies:** Professor Hill and Mr Thin (members), Professor Galbraith and Dr Jardine (attendees).

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**1. Dr Bridgewater's opening remarks**

- 1.1 Dr Bridgewater congratulated Mr Yeo on his appointment as Managing Director which takes effect from 9 September when Mr Steer retires.
- 1.2 It was agreed that item 9, JNCC 09 P12, would be taken as the first agenda item and item 18 (confidential session) would be taken in its place. (However, the order of items in the minutes reflects the original agenda).

**2. Declaration of interests**

- 2.1 Professor Usher declared his roles on the Scottish Biodiversity Forum, and Scottish Government's Rural and Environment Research and Analysis Directorate's Research Programme Group 'Environment- Land Use and Rural Stewardship', in relation to items 11 and 12. Mr Christensen has a standing declaration of his role on Defra's Management Board. Dr Bridgewater agreed there was no conflict of interest.

**3. Amendments to the minutes of the eighty first meeting (JNCC 09 P06)**

- 3.1 The minutes, as amended by JNCC 09 P06 were agreed subject to the addition of the words 'and that' before the suggested amendment to paragraph 10.2.

**4. Matters arising (JNCC 09 P10)**

- 4.1 Committee noted paper JNCC 09 P10. Additionally, Mr Yeo informed Committee that the booklet 'Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation: Inescapable Facts' was undergoing final amendment and would be available shortly (paragraph 7.1 of JNCC 09 M01). Mr Yeo was asked to include a reference to the UK Climate Change Projections (UKCP09) launched on 18 June 2009 and to keep Committee members informed about plans for publication and launch.

**5. Guidance for work on UK-wide conservation standards: a review of JNCC's role (JNCC 09 P09)**

- 5.1 Dr Stott introduced this paper which seeks to re-prioritise JNCC work on common standards in line with the new JNCC strategy. Revision of the guidance for SSSI selection, by JNCC, was given a low priority in the paper because legislative requirements are at country level. However, the Chief Scientists Group (CSG), who had considered the paper whilst in draft, had agreed that the country conservation bodies had a strong need for revised guidance. Similarly, CSG, had asked for revisions to the National Vegetation Classification to be given a higher priority. Dr Stott also reported that he had

given evidence to the Parliamentary Innovation Universities Science and Skills (IUSS) Committee session on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) held on 17 June. Dr Stott undertook to report, to the IUSS Committee, the decision made by the Joint Committee on the priority of work on the SSSI guidelines.

5.2 In discussion the following points were raised regarding revision of the SSSI guidelines:

- i) the guidelines need to be updated and revised to reflect new scientific information and changes in administration and legislation. In Scotland demand is less great because the designation programme is largely complete, however, the general need for review is recognised;
- ii) the SSSI guidelines apply to England, Scotland and Wales but they also underpin the selection of Areas of Special Scientific Interest in Northern Ireland;
- iii) JNCC's new strategy should be followed. This includes making the scientific evidence needed available to the country conservation bodies but not developing detailed standards for devolved matters. Also, country conservation bodies collectively have a wide pool of expertise which should be drawn on to revise the guidelines;
- iv) alternatively, JNCC could undertake the revisions as a service to the country conservation bodies as, whilst responsibilities and legislation for SSSI designation has changed, the principles underpinning the series remain the same throughout Great Britain, and are applicable throughout the UK.

5.3 The following points were raised on other aspects of the paper:

- i) historically Northern Ireland has managed its Earth Science Conservation Review work without input from JNCC but future support would be welcomed;
- ii) the priority for future JNCC work on coordinating Common Standards Monitoring information, INSPIRE, habitat polygon and metadata should be given further consideration. The Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) and Water Framework Directive should also be incorporated in the prioritisation process as necessary;
- iii) once JNCC has agreed how to deal with divisions and subdivisions under the National Vegetation Classification, the codes could be provided by JNCC for others to work on freely;
- iv) a similar review of priorities was needed for common standards in the marine environment;

- v) JNCC resources for 2010 and beyond are likely to be reduced. Accordingly, robust prioritisation will be needed;
- vi) a full list of standards considered within the review should be provided as an annex.

5.4 Joint Committee **agreed** that, whilst the priority of work to revise the SSSI guidelines varied between country conservation bodies, this should be given a higher priority by JNCC. Prioritisation of other areas discussed should be reviewed and reconsidered by Chief Scientists Group. A realistic assessment of the resource requirements and options for delivering higher priority standards work should be reported back to the next meeting of the Joint Committee in September. Further work should be undertaken to include requirements for UK-wide standards for work in the marine environment.

## 6. Site proposal for Wight-Barfleur Reef (JNCC 09 P07)

6.1 Dr Goold introduced this paper which summarised the proposal for an offshore draft SAC in the Eastern English Channel Regional Sea.

6.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i) whilst an impact assessment is undertaken to assess the socio-economic consequences of designation, the identification of sites is made solely on scientific grounds in accordance with the Habitats Directive. Socio-economic information is used by JNCC and the country conservation bodies in the development of management proposals. The boundaries for management measures could be greater or smaller than the site boundaries.

6.3 The Joint Committee **endorsed** the paper, subject to an amendment to the legend of figure 1, and the recommendation of Wight-Barfleur Reef to Defra as an offshore SAC

## 7. Governance arrangements for work on marine protected areas (JNCC 09 P11)

7.1 Dr Goold introduced this paper which sets out a revised approach to the governance of JNCC's work on marine protected areas (MPAs).

7.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i) resolving issues arising from the varying policy directions of Defra and the devolved administrations will be challenging. The authority of a Committee-level group will be helpful in seeking to do this and thereby free up technical and science work;
- ii) the arrangements provide welcome flexibility in JNCC governance in respect of MPA responsibilities. Committee will monitor decisions taken on its behalf, as set out in the annex 2 through reports from the Committee sub-group;

- iii) some flexibility in the membership and working arrangements of the technical group may be necessary to reflect the varying structures, resource levels and timetables of the country conservation bodies;
- iv) changing the Chair of the technical group from non-executive to executive level could reduce non-executives' knowledge of the detail of technical and scientific discussion leading to recommendations. Sub-group members may therefore attend the technical group as necessary;
- v) the scope of the groups may need to widen as new work such as marine spatial planning begins.

7.3 Joint Committee **approved** the proposed governance arrangements for marine protected areas and asked each of the country conservation bodies to nominate a Board/Council member, preferably with marine expertise, for membership of the sub-group. Professor Warren was appointed as Chair of the sub-group. The arrangements will be reviewed formally after a year of operation i.e. June 2010.

## **8. Influencing strategy for the 2012 review of the Common Fisheries Policy (JNCC 09 P08)**

8.1 Dr Goold introduced this paper which outlines the inter-agency Marine Fisheries Working Group's thinking on opportunities to enhance nature conservation which may arise in the 2012 Common Fisheries Policy review. An earlier version of the paper (JNCC 08 P12) was considered by Committee in December 2008.

8.2 Joint Committee **endorsed** the paper subject to amendments to some phrasing in paragraphs 2.8 (from maintenance to restoration of fish stocks) and 2.9. Committee noted that the paper will now be provided to Defra and the Scottish Government.

## **9. Standing Orders for meetings of Joint Committee (JNCC 09 P12)**

9.1 Mrs McQueen introduced draft Standing Orders, revised as part of the wider review of JNCC's strategy and corporate governance arrangements.

9.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i) Committee should continue to seek to make its arrangements as efficient, effective and environmentally sustainable as possible. Opportunities to interact with country conservation boards and field visits could be reviewed in future against these aims. Where necessary the Standing Orders will be amended further to allow this;
- ii) processes for inter-sessional decision-taking processes would need to balance efficiency against involvement of sufficient members and would be determined by Committee on a case by case basis.

9.3 Committee **endorsed** the revised Standing Orders subject to correction of text in paragraph 10.2.

## **10. Ecosystem services: a tool for nature conservation (JNCC 09 D05)**

10.1 Mr Yeo introduced this paper which explores some of the main issues being discussed in relation to the concept of ecosystem services as a tool for nature conservation.

10.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i) the nature conservation community needs to promote understanding of the importance of a healthy natural environment. The concept of ecosystem services has usefully resonated with Governments in this respect as have concepts of natural infrastructure and language around security e.g. energy security, food security etc;
- ii) it must be remembered that biodiversity and ecosystem services are not synonymous. The ‘cascade model’ is useful in clarifying the relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem services, and making a separation between function and benefits, which is useful for valuation. However, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is perhaps a better representation of ecosystem services as cycles with feedback loops. The existence of ecosystem services as benefit to other ecosystems (e.g. carbon sequestration) is also important to recognise;
- iii) knowledge of ecosystem services should be seen as central to the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach;
- iv) with Governments’ growing interest in ecosystem services, the country conservation bodies, JNCC and others are seeking to make rapid progress in raising awareness and providing and piloting tools and approaches (e.g. JNCC’s toolkit on ecosystem valuation and the Macaulay Land Use Research Institutes’ proposed field guide on the ecosystem approach). Working relationships are key to ensure efforts are complementary and to avoid duplication. The points raised above should inform this work.

## **11. UK National Ecosystem Assessment and related international assessment activity (JNCC 09 D03)**

11.1 Dr Stott introduced this paper which sets out plans for the UK National Ecosystem Assessment and the context of European and international processes.

11.2 In discussion, treatment of the marine environment as a single broad habitat/ ecosystem was raised as a concern. However, some reassurance was taken from the fact that this will be informed by, and build on, Charting Progress 2.

11.3 Joint Committee **noted** the plans and governance arrangements for the UK National Ecosystem Assessment, **endorsed** JNCC's proposed role and **agreed** to consider any relevant findings of Phase 1 of the Assessment at a later meeting.

**12. Global biodiversity mechanisms: a thematic review of recent developments and future evidence needs (JNCC 09 D02)**

12.1 Mr Yeo introduced this paper which sets out preliminary conclusions from a one-day conference on 20 May, hosted by JNCC, to provide feedback to stakeholders on the outcomes of recent meetings and to look forward to future implementation.

12.2 Dr Bridgewater reported that the conference had worked very well and had good representation from Defra and the devolved administrations, country conservation bodies and non-governmental organisations.

12.3 Joint Committee **noted** the successful event and in discussion it was proposed that enhancing the UK's role and influence in the European Union is considered as a further step. Committee was informed that the possibility of a similar event with EU institutions and other Member States was being considered with this in mind.

**13. Environmental implications of crisis economics (JNCC 09 D04)**

13.1 Dr Bridgewater welcomed this paper which explores some of the issues relating to nature conservation arising from the current economic crisis and governments' response to it. The paper would be used as a basis for an evening presentation by the author. Following the evening presentation, opportunities will be taken to explore this issue as opportunity arises.

**14. Annual report from the Audit and Risk Management Committee (JNCC 09 N03)**

14.1 Mr Pritchard introduced this paper which presents the Annual Assurance Report from internal audit. This report would also be considered by JNCC Support Co Board at its meeting following Committee but was presented to this meeting as the scope of the Audit and Risk Management Committee also included relevant matters reserved for Committee. The audit programme for 2008/09 had been completed satisfactorily and resulting assurance ratings reflected healthy systems and controls.

14.2 Joint Committee **noted** the paper.

**15. Report from the Executive Management Board (JNCC 09 N04)**

15.1 This paper reported the main items discussed by EMB and other significant issues relating to the Joint Committee's reserved matters since March.

15.2 Joint Committee **noted** the paper and a correction to paragraph 4. In discussion Joint Committee **agreed** that the paper on implications of devolution for JNCC's work in offshore waters should come to Committee in December and a paper on the conclusions of the Galway moderation meeting for marine SACs should be circulated as soon as possible.

**16. AOB**

There was no other business.

**17. Date and venue of the next meeting**

17.1 24 September 2009 in Peterborough.

17.2 Dr Bridgewater informed Committee that Mr Steer will retire before the September meeting, and noted that there will be an opportunity to pay due tribute closer to the time of his retirement. On the occasion of his last meeting, the Joint Committee, expressed their sincere thanks for Mr Steer's long and outstanding service as JNCC's Managing Director.