



JNCC Business Plan

2011/12

jncc.gov.uk

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) business plan for 2011/12

Introduction

This business plan sets out JNCC's priorities for 2011/12 and how we will allocate resources to achieve them. It is based upon agreed levels of funding provided by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, and anticipated income from other sources.

Priorities for 2011/12 are set within the context of objectives for the period 2011-15. However, funding is not yet agreed beyond 2011/12, and so these longer-term objectives should be regarded as indicative only.

About JNCC

JNCC is the public body that advises the UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide and international nature conservation. It was originally established under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and reconstituted by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Our work contributes to maintaining and enriching biological diversity, conserving geological features and sustaining natural systems. These provide the core services upon which humans depend, including fresh water, clean air and food. In this way they contribute to economic growth and social well-being and are integral to sustainable development.

Wise decisions are informed decisions. Better policy making, improved planning, innovative development and effective risk management depend on having reliable and current information on the status and trends of biodiversity as well as full cost and benefit implications. JNCC's role is to provide evidence, information and advice to enable decisions to be taken that protect our natural resources and environmental systems.

JNCC is led by the Joint Committee, which brings together members from the nature conservation bodies for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and independent members appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under an independent Chair.

Support is provided to the Committee by a company set up and controlled by the Committee solely for that purpose. The company employs staff who provide scientific and technical expertise on global, European and national aspects of nature conservation, and skills in working with other organisations.

How we support government

JNCC's work contributes to the achievement of the goals of the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland. We aim to continue to be trusted by them to provide impartial advice based on robust science and evidence, and to continue to attune our work to emerging priorities.

JNCC provides direct support to Defra on 'reserved' functions, including work with an international dimension and nature conservation in offshore marine waters (beyond 12 nautical miles). Direct support is also provided to Scottish Government in relation to those responsibilities for offshore waters around Scotland which have been executively devolved. We also support the work of various other Whitehall departments, including the Department

for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and the Department for International Development (DFID).

Nature conservation within the UK is a devolved responsibility. The devolved administrations are supported in their work by the country nature conservation bodies (Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Council for Wales and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency). JNCC plays a complementary role, working in close partnership with the country nature conservation bodies. We help to make devolution work more effectively and ensure that European and international obligations are met by acting as a science-policy interface between domestic and EU/global bodies, and providing evidence-based advice to support decision-making at appropriate levels. Similarly, where requested, we provide support and advice on biodiversity issues to the governments of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

Defra, other Whitehall departments and Natural England

JNCC provides policy-relevant advice and information to Defra which contributes to the department's responsibilities for nature conservation in England, the UK and internationally. In 2011/12, JNCC will support the following actions contained in Defra's business plan:

- Publish a Natural Environment White Paper setting out measures to: protect wildlife, promote green spaces and wildlife corridors; value natural capital, complementing national accounts; and produce an analysis of the state of the UK's natural asset base (the National Ecosystems Assessment)
- Lead efforts to protect the marine environment
 - Agree Marine Policy Statement and publish first draft of Marine Conservation Zones
 - Analyse the formal advice on Marine Conservation Zones, with impact assessments, provided by the statutory nature conservation bodies
 - Run consultation on Marine Conservation Zones proposals
 - Designate Marine Conservation Zones
- Work to influence EU Commission proposals on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), to be submitted for negotiation by EC Council and Parliament
- Work with European partners to agree a new EU biodiversity strategy

JNCC will also support the following actions contained in the business plans of other departments:

- Develop a new strategy for the Overseas Territories which provides more effective support for their development, better risk management and is agreed by the whole UK Government (FCO)
- Support actions to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (DFID)
- Develop a new programme to improve forest management and tackle illegal logging in order to reduce deforestation (DFID)
- Drive deployment of renewable energy across the UK to ensure that at least 15% of UK energy comes from renewable sources by 2020 (DECC)
- Launch the REDD+ partnership on international forestry (DECC)

Support for Natural England will be focused on helping them to achieve their priorities in the following areas:

- Marine nature conservation (identification of marine protected areas, biodiversity monitoring, and implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive)

- Evidence, analysis and standards (contributing to a more strategic approach to evidence work across the Defra family, development of ecosystem service approaches and environmental valuation and appraisal methods)

Scottish Government and Scottish Natural Heritage

JNCC will continue to support work to identify and help deliver the contribution which responsible management of Scotland's natural resources can make to increasing sustainable economic growth. JNCC will be prepared to review its 2011/12 priorities to ensure that they remain aligned with any significant changes to natural heritage policy that may arise following the Scottish Parliamentary elections on 5 May 2011.

JNCC's current priorities for Scotland are summarised below.

- Marine nature conservation: JNCC will continue to work with Marine Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) on identification and management of Marine Protected Areas, marine Special Protection Areas and offshore Special Areas of Conservation. We will also provide scientific advice to inform decisions on offshore wind and marine renewables.
- Ecosystems and biodiversity: JNCC will regularly provide SNH and the Scottish Government with information on international and UK-level biodiversity actions and will help develop indicators on the health of ecosystems and the value of ecosystem services at a UK level. JNCC will also support the Special Protection Areas review.
- Surveillance, information management and reporting: JNCC will continue to support the delivery of UK-level datasets through the National Biodiversity Network and will agree with SNH the evaluation tools that should be further developed. JNCC will continue to support SNH with the delivery of the Scottish surveillance strategy.

Welsh Government and the Countryside Council for Wales

JNCC will continue to support the work of the Welsh Government and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) in their sustainable management of the land and seas of Wales through advice on UK standards and reporting. JNCC will be prepared to review its 2011/12 priorities to ensure that they remain aligned with any significant changes to environmental policy that may arise following the National Assembly for Wales elections on 5 May 2011.

JNCC's current priorities for Wales are summarised below.

- Ecosystems and biodiversity: JNCC will support CCW and the Welsh Government in their work in developing a Natural Environment Framework for Wales (*A Living Wales*). This will include advice on international and UK-level biodiversity actions, assistance with the development of indicators on the health of ecosystems, and the value of ecosystem services at a UK level.
- Marine nature conservation: JNCC will continue to work with CCW and the Welsh Government on UK marine issues, marine spatial planning, marine Special Protection Areas and offshore Special Areas of Conservation as they relate to Welsh waters.
- Surveillance, information management and reporting: JNCC will continue to support the delivery of UK-level datasets through the National Biodiversity Network, and partnerships with the Biological Records Centre, the British Trust for Ornithology and others. JNCC will also provide support to CCW and Welsh Government for the forthcoming UK report to the European Commission on the Habitats Directive, due in 2013.

Support to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Department of Environment (DOE) will be focused on helping them to achieve their priorities in the following areas.

- Surveillance and monitoring: JNCC will support NIEA in producing and delivering an action plan implementing its Surveillance and Monitoring Strategy for Protected Habitats and Species.
- Marine nature conservation: JNCC will advise NIEA on the designation and management of marine protected areas, including the preparation of a statutory management scheme for Rathlin Island.
- Biodiversity conservation: JNCC will support DOE in its revision of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy to take on board new international and European objectives and targets.

Working with Government bodies and civil society

JNCC works with a large number of other organisations in Government and in civil society. Through this collaborative approach we help to join up nature conservation policy and implementation at different geographical scales and across sectors, and to maximise returns from investments in research and surveillance in order to provide a strong and cost-effective evidence base.

Examples of our approach include:

- Working in partnership with other statutory bodies with a marine remit (including the country conservation bodies, the Marine Management Organisation, Cefas and Marine Scotland) to achieve shared goals in a cost-effective manner.
- Supporting civil society involvement in nature conservation through productive partnerships with a range of third sector organisations (including the British Trust for Ornithology, Butterfly Conservation and others), and through them with thousands of volunteers, to deliver surveillance schemes that provide essential information on biodiversity status and trends across the UK.
- Participating in European and wider international networks dealing with scientific and technical aspects of nature conservation to share experiences, learn from good practice outside the UK, and build partnerships.

Strategic goals

Through the provision of evidence, information and advice JNCC will make a distinctive contribution to three inter-related strategic goals:

- i. Decisions affecting the natural environment are informed by a sound UK, EU and global evidence base.
- ii. UK government and devolved administrations meet their international obligations and achieve favourable outcomes for biodiversity in the UK and internationally.
- iii. UK's offshore marine waters are healthy, clean and biologically diverse.

Objectives and performance measures

JNCC's work in support of these strategic goals over the period 2011-15 will be focused on six objectives.

In 2011/12, our performance will be measured primarily in terms of delivering outputs of advice, information and services. Twenty-one priority outputs are set out below (numbered 1.1, 1.2, etc).

Our input measures will be the cost of programmes.

We will continue to seek feedback from our main stakeholders on the extent to which:

- our advice, information and services has met their requirements and is used to inform decisions;
- our ways of working are effective in meeting priorities such as improving collaboration between government bodies and civil society;
- our evidence has been produced to the standards required;
- our priorities reflect the most important risks to the natural environment.

We will develop a structured approach for gaining stakeholder feedback for future years to provide performance information.

Objective 1. Maintain and develop biodiversity surveillance programmes, sufficient to achieve policy and statutory obligations cost-effectively

- 1.1 Maintain and develop terrestrial species surveillance programmes:
 - i. publish updated trends for bird, butterfly and mammal species
 - ii. deliver efficiency savings and changes to the work of the Biological Records Centre to meet more information and reporting requirements, and to fill gaps in monitoring across Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- 1.2 Facilitate application of Earth observation data and provide advice on how to use it to produce evidence necessary to meet Habitats Directive requirements and other priority needs for habitat information
- 1.3 Undertake research and development work necessary to advise on options for a co-ordinated and integrated system of marine biodiversity monitoring covering all UK waters:
 - i. make progress with partners in the Healthy and Biologically Diverse Expert Group on a biological monitoring programme
 - ii. develop sampling strata and indicators for habitat monitoring including a collaborative cruise
 - iii. evaluate the power of trialled and existing survey to assess change in cetacean and inshore waterbird populations
 - iv. make progress with government partners on future vessel sharing arrangements

Objective 2. Provide access to, and reporting of, information, evidence and knowledge on UK and international biodiversity

- 2.1 Develop and agree the process for Habitats Directive reporting, including the evidence requirements and implications for monitoring of priority species and habitats
- 2.2 Support Defra to achieve a pragmatic evidence-based approach to the new Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), building on existing initiatives, and facilitate efficient engagement by the UK biodiversity science and policy communities
- 2.3 Increase the use of the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) by providing advice to facilitate its application, undertaking technical development of the NBN gateway and developing interpretation tools for the analysis of biological recording data
- 2.4 Provide evidence, analysis and advice to support the application of the Ecosystem Approach and the consideration of ecosystem services within nature conservation, including analysis of the suitability of using existing monitoring and surveillance to produce effective and efficient indicators of ecosystem services
- 2.5 Contribute to the implementation of country environment strategies within the UK, in particular by facilitating links to international and European commitments, including those of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its framework of 2020 goals and targets agreed in Nagoya
- 2.6 Provide evidence, analysis and advice on the UK's impact on biodiversity overseas, including publication of an annual update on the impacts of UK biomass consumption on biodiversity overseas, supported by a database
- 2.7 Create habitat maps and associated confidence layers, including maps produced from surveyed and modelled outputs and habitat vulnerability maps
- 2.8 Initiate a project¹ to enhance the UK's ability to respond to major oil spill incidents by updating oil spill sensitivity maps for seabirds and developing JNCC's capacity to provide surveyors in the event of a spill, as agreed as part of JNCC's role in the Oil Spill National Contingency Plan

Objective 3. Provide advice to enable UK and devolved governments to meet their EU and international obligations for biodiversity and sustainable development.

- 3.1 Provide advice to support government engagement at EU level, particularly to support implementation of the forthcoming EU Biodiversity Strategy, and to provide coordinated input of UK expertise to the advisory groups of the Coordination Group for Biodiversity and Nature dealing with reporting on directives, indicators, green infrastructure and other priority issues
- 3.2 Support UK participation in, and implementation of, priority Multilateral Environmental Agreements:

¹ Subject to funding confirmation from Oil & Gas UK.

- i. contribute to the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on Biological Diversity's scientific advisory body, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Animals Committee
 - ii. advise to service standards on approximately 20,000 CITES licence permits
- 3.3 Support implementation of the UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy and the established regional focal points (Caribbean and South Atlantic) through capacity building, the identification and promotion of research priorities, implementation of the multilateral Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, and provision of the secretariat to the UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group
- 3.4 Support implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in UK waters by working through the UK Marine Monitoring and Assessment Strategy and OSPAR to facilitate development of biodiversity-related targets and indicators at a regional seas scale

Objective 4. Enable UK administrations to substantially complete the UK network of well managed marine protected areas, sufficient to meet national, EU and international requirements

- 4.1 To contribute to the objectives of the Habitats Directive:
 - i. recommend to Scottish Government four draft Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in offshore waters around Scotland
 - ii. conduct and report on a public consultation on three possible SACs in offshore waters around England
 - iii. provide formal conservation objectives and advice to Competent Authorities on seven European offshore marine sites
- 4.2 To contribute to the objectives of the Birds Directive, identify a suite of inshore waterbird Special Protection Areas around the UK on behalf of the country nature conservation bodies
- 4.3 To contribute to an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in UK waters:
 - i. advise Defra by 16 January 2012 on a suite of Marine Conservation Zones in offshore waters around England, Wales and Northern Ireland, accompanied by an Impact Assessment
 - ii. identify possible Nature Conservation MPAs in offshore waters around Scotland

Objective 5. Provide advice on marine biodiversity to enable sustainable management of the offshore environment

- 5.1 Ensure that 95% of requests for statutory advice on offshore industries (including oil and gas, renewables and aggregates) are responded to fully within the relevant consultation period

Objective 6. Manage and develop the organisation to identify and meet changing demands and opportunities, maximise its effectiveness in achieving our strategic goals and improve operational efficiency

- 6.1 Deliver a programme of organisational changes in response to the Spending Review settlement, including staff complement, management structures, working practices and process streamlining to deliver efficiencies
- 6.2 Develop and implement science quality assurance policies and procedures to ensure JNCC produces robust, high-quality evidence, in compliance with Government Chief Scientific Adviser Guidelines

Resources

JNCC receives the majority of its funding from Defra and the devolved administrations. This comprises:

- i. funding provided by Defra for ‘reserved’ activities (advice on international nature conservation and work in the marine environment beyond territorial waters);
- ii. funding provided by Defra and devolved administrations for ‘UK co-ordination’ activities (work that is relevant to all parts of the UK).

Additionally, JNCC receives funding from other sources for specific projects.

The amounts and sources of funding for 2011/12 are shown in the following table. These reflect reductions of 6% in UK co-ordination spend and 5% in core (non-marine) reserved spend compared to 2010/11.

<i>All figures in £k</i>	2010/11	2011/12
Grant-in-aid		
Defra (core reserved and marine reserved)	4,679	5,609 ²
Defra (through Natural England)	2,806	2,638
Scottish Government (through Scottish Natural Heritage)	1,653	1,554
Welsh Government (through the Countryside Council for Wales)	826	776
Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland	412	387
Total grant-in-aid	10,376	10,964
Other income (estimated for 2011/12)	918	564
Total funding	11,294	11,528

² This figure includes £270k that has been provided to Cefas under a partnership agreement rather than to JNCC as grant-in-aid. This amount will be increased later in the year.

Allocations of funding to each of the six objectives are shown in the following table.

<i>All figures in £k</i>	Grant-in-aid				Other income	Total
	UK co-ordination	Core reserved	Marine reserved	Total GIA		
Objective 1. Biodiversity surveillance	1,647	31	1,255 ³	2,933	115	3,048
Objective 2. Information and evidence	914	126	683	1,723	183	1,906
Objective 3. EU and international obligations	585	961	404	1,951	31	1,982
Objective 4. Marine protected areas	658	483	1,565	2,707	0	2,707
Objective 5. Offshore management advice	45	101	0	146	235	381
Objective 6. Managing and developing JNCC	1,505	0	0	1,505	0	1,505
Total	5,355	1,702	3,907	10,964	564	11,528

Work will be delivered by approximately 153 full-time equivalent staff.

Key risks

The key risks relating to the achievement of the priority outputs in this business plan are as follows.

- *Partnerships and collaboration.* Much of JNCC's work requires contributions to be made by other organisations. Following the Spending Review many organisations will be subject to budget reductions and associated reviews of priorities. Consequently there are risks that some partners may be unable to input to the level, or at the time, required, impacting on JNCC's progress against plans (particularly acute in objectives 1, 2 and 4).
- *Availability of staff.* JNCC's work is heavily dependent on staff with scientific and technical expertise. Because of the rapid growth in marine work in JNCC and other organisations, Government recruitment restrictions and relatively short-term funding settlements there are risks that we will not be able to recruit and retain suitable staff (particularly acute for marine work in objectives 1-5).
- *Efficiency.* Objective 6 assumes that current systems and administration levels are sufficient to meet information requirements from Governments and under information legislation. If demands remain at, or increase from, the high levels of 2009/10 there will be serious risks to our ability to make required efficiency savings and some risks to delivery of other objectives.

³ This figure includes £270k that has been provided to Cefas under a partnership agreement rather than to JNCC as grant-in-aid. This amount will be increased later in the year.