



## Joint Nature Conservation Committee 115th Meeting Minutes Confirmed (official)

<b>Date:</b> 7 June 2018	<b>Time:</b> 09.00
<b>Venue:</b> JNCC offices, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1JY	

### Present

Professor Melanie Austen  
Independent member

Ms Cath Denholm  
Scottish Natural Heritage

Professor Colin Galbraith  
Independent member

Professor Chris Gilligan  
Independent Chair

Dr Madeleine Havard  
Natural Resources Wales

Dr Joe Horwood  
Natural England

Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Professor Marian Scott  
Independent member

### In attendance

Mr Chris Brooks  
JNCC

Ms Mairi Cole  
Scottish Natural Heritage

Mr Mike Evans  
Natural Resources Wales

Dr Steve Gibson  
JNCC

Dr John Goold  
JNCC

Mrs Sarah Harrison item 15  
JNCC

Mr Jason Hill item 16  
JNCC

Dr Tim Hill  
Natural England

Ms Shendi Keshet item 13  
JNCC

Professor Christine Maggs  
JNCC

Sara McGuckin  
DAERA

Mrs Tracey Quince  
JNCC

Mr Paul Rose  
JNCC

Professor Michael Winter (Observer)  
Natural England

Dr Paul Woodcock item 15  
JNCC

Mr Marcus Yeo  
JNCC

## **Apologies**

### **Members**

**Mr Charles Banner**  
Independent member

**Professor Ian Bateman**  
Independent member

**Dr Mike Cantlay**  
Scottish Natural Heritage

**Diane McCrea**  
Natural Resources Wales

**Professor Howard Platt**  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

### **Attendees**

**Mrs Helen Anderson**  
DAERA

**Mrs Sally Thomas**  
Scottish Natural Heritage

## **1. Closed session for members only**

- 1.1 There are no minutes for this item.

## **2. Chairman's opening remarks**

- 2.1 Professor Gilligan welcomed Professor Scott and Ms Denholm to their first meeting. Each gave a brief introduction to their background and interests. Welcomes were also extended to attendees Ms McGuckin (Northern Ireland Environment Agency) and Ms Cole (Scottish Natural Heritage). Professor Winter (Natural England) was also welcomed as an observer.
- 2.2 Professor Gilligan reported on a recent IT incident that led to erroneous cancellation emails being sent about the June Committee dinner and meeting. The problem had arisen from syncing an external calendar with the JNCC calendar, which had unpredictable consequences. Members were asked to be cautious to avoid future occurrences, until the problem can be resolved.
- 2.3 Professor Gilligan noted that he had recently met Sir Harry Studholme, Chair, Forestry Commission.
- 2.4 Professor Gilligan informed members of the forthcoming JNCC conference *Beyond the Coast*, to be held at the University of Hull in June. The conference will bring together practitioners, academics and others to discuss marine conservation in the UK's offshore environment. Members were welcome to attend. The recent conference in Manchester organised by the UK nature

conservation agencies and the British Ecological Society had been well attended.

### **3 Declaration of interests**

- 3.1. No new declarations were made.

### **4 Confidential minutes of the March 2018 meeting (JNCC 18 17)**

- 4.1 The minutes of the March meeting were confirmed.

### **5 Matters arising (JNCC 18 18)**

- 5.1 There were no matters arising.

- 5.2 The Committee noted the report of outstanding actions in Annex 1. In relation to the development of a list of questions to be answered through academic partnerships, members felt that the policy pitches at the recent conference on the future of nature conservation might help to identify gaps and refine the questions.

Action point(s)
AP01. Professor Maggs to consider using the policy pitches from the recent conference on the future of nature conservation to refine the list of JNCC research questions

### **6 Chief Executive's report on topical issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 19)**

- 6.1 The minutes for this item are official sensitive.

### **7 Report from Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Sub-Group (Official) (Oral report)**

- 7.1 Dr Horwood reported that the MPA Sub-Group had last met on 7 March. Professor Austen had been appointed to the Sub-Group at that meeting, following Joint Committee approval in March.
- 7.2 Recent discussions had centred on the Defra consultation on the third tranche of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). The MPA Sub-Group will consider the post-consultation advice in late September/early October, with the timeline dependent on consultation outcomes.

### **8 Report from ARAC (oral)**

- 8.1 Professor Galbraith gave a presentation on the key issues discussed at the ARAC meeting on 6 June.

- 8.2 The meeting had focussed on a number of matters and the Committee was informed that:
- i. Mr Tony Hams, external member, would be leaving ARAC on 31 August;
  - ii. ARAC requested that a number of outstanding actions, including anti-fraud training for all staff, sharing JNCC's significant risks with country body ARACs and creating an integrated assurance framework be implemented by senior management as soon as possible;
  - iii. ARAC also requested that the failure to complete audit recommendations within prescribed deadlines be raised with team leaders to effect a change in the overall business attitude to audit;
  - iv. a 'moderate assurance' for 2017/18 had been received from the Head of Internal Audit, meaning that a sound system of internal control, designed to meet JNCC's objectives was in place, with some improvements required to enhance the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance. ARAC was content with the opinion;
  - v. Nigel Reader had undertaken a comprehensive review of the Annual Report and Accounts on behalf of ARAC prior to discussion by the full committee. ARAC was pleased to see an unqualified audit opinion on the accounts.
  - vi. five recommendations were made by the National Audit Office (NAO) in relation to the accounts. All recommendations had been accepted by management for implementation;
  - vii. the end-of-year compliance report detailed a healthy picture and the final audit report on Data Quality Controls had received substantial assurance;
  - viii. in receiving an update on implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), ARAC noted that while some low-level risks remain around implementation of GDPR-compliant contract templates and special category HR data, these risks were being managed;
  - ix. a new system for monitoring Evidence Quality Assurance will be up and running from September this year;
  - x. risks in relation to the CITES licensing system (Unicorn) are being managed with an opportunity for greater linkage between JNCC and APHA to communicate and escalate risks to Defra.

- 8.3 The Committee thanked Professor Galbraith for his report and asked that a letter of thanks be sent to Mr Hams for his work on ARAC.

## 9 Annual Report from ARAC (Official) (JNCC 18 22)

- 9.1 Professor Galbraith introduced the item.
- 9.2 The Committee welcomed the report, noting its engaging tone and helpful layout. In discussion, the following comment was made:
- i. in the foreword, the term 'acting as the conscience of the organisation' would resonate well with staff and coupled with a simple summary of ARAC responsibilities, could help engage staff with ARAC and internal audit.

- 9.3 Professor Galbraith informed members that the assurance statement on page 11 would over time become more holistic, particularly with the development of the integrated assurance framework in 2018/19.
- 9.4 The Committee thanked Professor Galbraith and Mrs Quince for an excellent report, noting the clarity of content and the helpful section on future direction. The Committee noted Mr Reader's comments at the ARAC meeting the previous day that the conduct and content of JNCC's ARAC meetings was 'best in class'. The Committee were assured that JNCC had a well-functioning ARAC in place.

Action point(s)
AP02 Mrs Quince to develop a simple summary of ARAC responsibilities and purpose to communicate to staff to help increase engagement with ARAC and the work of internal audit.

## **10 Report from Chief Scientists Group (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 20)**

10.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## **11 External factors affecting JNCC (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 21)**

11.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## **12 Update on JNCC's EU exit activities (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 29)**

12.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## **13 Q4 performance report 2017/18 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 23)**

13.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## **14 Business plan for 2018/19 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 24)**

14.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## **15 Use of eDNA and metabarcoding for nature conservation**

## (Official) (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 10)

15.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## 16 Communications strategy (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 28)

16.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## 17 Joint Committee self-assessment (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 30)

17.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## 18 Revisions to the schedule of delegations (Official) (JNCC 18 27)

18.1 Mr Yeo introduced this item which provided a revised schedule of delegations for matters to be dealt with at Joint Committee level or delegated to the Chief Executive. The revised schedule included a delegation to the Chair to sign off SSSI guideline revisions on behalf of the Committee. The revised schedule had been discussed and agreed by the Executive Leadership Team and was recommended to the Joint Committee for approval. The paper also contained revised terms of reference for the Remuneration Committee.

18.2 The Committee agreed the revised schedule of delegations, subject to the addition of the 'handling document' for marine protected areas recently developed by Dr Goold. The Committee agreed the revised terms of reference for the Remuneration Committee and approved the appointment of Dr Havard to the Committee.

Action point(s)
AP08 Mrs Quince to produce a final version of the schedule of delegations.

## 19 Joint Committee forward programme (Official-Sensitive) (JNCC 18 26)

19.1 The minutes for this item are official-sensitive.

## 20 Any other business

20.1 Professor Scott asked for a review of the induction process once the current round of induction had concluded. This was agreed.

20.2 The next meeting is to be held in York on 19-20 September 2018.