



## Minutes of the 136<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Confirmed

**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (Day one of a two-part meeting).

**Time:** 11:00

**Venue:** Stephenson/Hutcheson room, Inverdee House, Baxter Street, Aberdeen, AB11 9QA

### Present

#### Members

Melanie Austen  
Natural England

Charles Banner  
Interim Chair

David Blencathra  
Natural England

Cath Denholm  
Independent member

Pete Higgins  
NatureScot

Aoife Martin  
NatureScot

Tom Meagher  
Independent member

Julian Orford  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Steve Ormerod  
Natural Resources Wales

#### Attendees

Natalie Askew  
JNCC

David Collins  
JNCC

Maddy Crocker – item 8 only  
Defra

John Goold  
JNCC

Rebecca Grattage  
Board apprentice

Gemma Harper  
JNCC

Lynn Heeley  
JNCC

Tim Hill  
Natural England

Sara McGuckin  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Jem Powell  
JNCC staff observer

Tracey Quince  
JNCC

Beth Stoker  
JNCC

Steve Wilkinson  
JNCC

Sarah Wood  
Natural resources Wales

## Apologies

## Members

Rhys Jones  
Natural Resources Wales

### 1. Closed session (members only)

1.1. There are no minutes for this item.

### 2. Chairman's opening remarks

2.1. Charles Banner welcomed members and attendees to the 136<sup>th</sup> meeting.

2.2. Committee congratulated Cath Denholm on her nomination for the Scottish Women's awards 2023. Members wished her well for the finalists ceremony on 16<sup>th</sup> September.

2.3. Committee congratulated Steve Ormerod on becoming a fellow of the Royal Entomological Society.

### 3. Declaration of interests

3.1. One new declaration was declared. Aoife Martin declared she had become Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, a US NGO. This did not represent a conflict for this meeting.

3.2. Members were reminded of the need to keep their declarations up to date and to advise the Governance team of any new declarations as soon as they occur. There was no conflict of interest for the meeting.

### 4. Confidential minutes of the June 2023 Meeting (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 23 35D)

4.1 This item was taken in confidence.

### 5. Matters arising (Official) (JNCC 23 36I)

5.1. Members discussed the paper and agreed:-

i. Action AP12 from the March 2022 meeting should be removed from the

- action points table.
- ii. Action AP01 from the June 2023 meeting should be amended to reflect that the November ARAC meeting was now taking place in Quay House in Peterborough.

5.2. This section was taken in confidence.

5.3. Members **noted** the paper and confirmed they were content with the progress made on outstanding actions to date.

Action point(s)
AP01. Tracey Elliott to remove AP12 of the March 2022 meeting from the action points table and amend AP01 of the June meeting to reflect the location changes for the November ARAC meeting.

## 6. CEO report (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 23 37I)

6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 7. New agenda and meeting formats (Official) (JNCC 23 38D)

7.1 The item was introduced by Dave Stone.

7.2 The item had been developed following reflection after the meeting in Northern Ireland in June and the need to optimise the experience and expertise of the Committee to help guide the organisation and to restructure agendas to give better continuity and open up discussions.

7.3 Joint Committee members concluded the following in relation to the paper:

### Agendas

- i. Agendas should be restructured taking a streamlined thematic approach, but the agendas for both days should contain a mix of science/policy matters and corporate standing items to ensure both are given equal importance.

### Papers

- i. Papers are an important historical record of a public bodies decision making and transparency, reflecting the accountability of such a body. Papers to the Joint Committee should be succinct and concise to provide a clear audit trail but retain a level of detail that allows the reader to see the context behind the decision and allow for briefing to be prepared for members in advance of meetings. Cover notes should be clear in setting out the key issues, the recommendations and decisions sought. PowerPoints could be used to

summarise key points of a paper and to engage Committee in the subject but should be judicious in their use.

### Meetings

- i. Intersessional meetings and correspondence should be kept to a minimum.
- ii. More time should be given to strategic thinking at meetings, with the possibility of a stand-alone session of Committee with a set of questions posed.

### Engagement events

- i. More expertise and resource into engagement events was required to maximise their value, make them purposeful and to improve engagement with stakeholders. Inviting external speakers to present on particular topics at events should be encouraged.

### Dinners

- i. External speakers at dinner should be encouraged, linking the speaker to the meeting agenda theme and agenda items.

- 7.4 The Joint Committee **considered** and **discussed** the proposals for revising the agenda and meeting formats and agreed their preferences as described above. Members highlighted the need for changes to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

Action point(s)
AP02. Governance team to note and implement the changes agreed for the November meeting.

## 8. Update on implementation of the CBD Global Biodiversity Framework (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 23 39I)

- 8.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 9. Briefing for engagement event and introduction to SP2 (Official) (JNCC 23 40P)

- 9.1 Beth Stoker introduced the item, explaining that the engagement event was focused on strategic priority 2 “Advise on policy to progress nature recovery”, with a focus on halting and reversing biodiversity loss in the marine environment.
- 9.2 Beth explained that the event would focus on the 2023 OSPAR Quality Status Report and the North East Atlantic Environmental Strategy 2030, and the actions needed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. The event would include a series of presentations and structured discussions, with opportunities for networking with

colleagues from government, public sector, academia, environmental NGOs and industry. Beth highlighted the programme for the event and explained how the breakout groups would operate. The conclusions of the session would be discussed at the main Joint Committee meeting being held the following day.

## 10. Any other business (Official)

- 10.1 Steve Wilkinson raised the issue of information sharing with members and the security protocols currently in place. The current processes were quite relaxed and did not reflect the tightening of security protocols across the organisation following the Blue Iron cyber security incident in December 2019. There was now a need to look at current working and gain Committee's perspective on a way forward. Charles Banner suggested that a small group of Committee members work with the Executive to look at how members access information and how information is shared, with a view to producing a set of proposals for the Joint Committee to discuss. Cath Denholm volunteered for the group, with Charles encouraging others to also volunteer. Committee agreed that the group should consider standard practice in other organisations and factor best practice into their final proposals.

Action point(s)
AP05. Joint Committee members to volunteer for a joint working group with staff to explore options for more robust information sharing.



## Minutes of the 136th meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Confirmed

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (Day two of a two-part meeting).

**Time:** 09:30

**Venue:** Stephenson/Hutcheson room, Inverdee House, Baxter Street, Aberdeen, AB11 9QA

### Present

#### Members

Melanie Austen  
Natural England

Charles Banner  
Interim JNCC chair

David Blencathra  
Natural England

Cath Denholm – items 1-5 only  
Independent member

Pete Higgins  
NatureScot

Aoife Martin – items 1-5 & 9-11  
NatureScot

Tom Meagher  
Independent member

Julian Orford  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Steve Ormerod  
Natural Resources Wales

#### Attendees

Natalie Askew  
JNCC

David Collins  
JNCC

John Goold  
JNCC

Rebecca Grattage  
Board apprentice

Gemma Harper  
JNCC

Lynn Heeley  
JNCC

Tim Hill  
Natural England

Sarah McGuckin  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Jem Powell  
JNCC staff observer

Tracey Quince  
JNCC

Dave Stone  
JNCC

Beth Stoker  
JNCC

Eileen Stuart  
NatureScot

Steve Wilkinson  
JNCC

Sarah Wood  
Natural Resources Wales

## Apologies

## Members

Rhys Jones  
Natural Resources Wales

### **1. Closed session (members and ELT only)**

1.1. There are no minutes for this item.

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

2.1 Charles Banner welcomed everyone to day 2 of the 136<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

### **3. Declaration of interests**

3.1 One new declaration was made. Cath Denholm declared she had recently become a Board member of Turning Point Scotland. This did not represent a conflict for this meeting.

### **4. Feedback on the engagement event (Official-sensitive) (Oral)**

4.1 This item was taken in confidence.

### **5. ARAC and People Committee updates (Official-sensitive) (Presentation)**

5.1 This item was taken in confidence.

### **6. Report from the three thematic Joint Committee sub-groups) (Official-Sensitive) (JNCC 23 41P)**

6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 7. Strategic updates from around the UK (Official-sensitive) (Oral)

7.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 8. Report from the Chief Scientist Group (CSG) (Official-sensitive) (Oral)

8.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 9. Q1 Performance report for 2023/2024 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 23 42D)

9.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 10. Mid-Year review of Joint Committee working objectives (Official) (JNCC23 43D)

10.1 Tracey Quince introduced the item explaining that discussing progress towards meeting the objectives at the half-year point affords an opportunity to discuss input to the objectives and any additional tasks that may be required. In particular, members had raised whether they could assist more in raising the profile of JNCC and promoting external relations.

10.2 Members agreed that the current set of tasks in objective 5 (external relations) adequately covered the ask of members in the communications area.

10.3 Joint Committee **discussed** their input to the working objectives for 2023/24 at the half year point and **agreed** no additional input was required to achieve the objectives by the end of March 2024.

## 11. Review of Joint Committee/Company Board Standing Orders (Official) (JNCC23 44D)



11.1 Tracey Quince introduced the item explaining that the standing orders for the Joint Committee and Company Board are reviewed biennially. This reflected best practice for Boards. The current version had been agreed in September 2021 where a number of changes were made, post pandemic, to reflect new ways of working in relation to virtual meetings, sustainability and cost. The 2023 review had been light touch with only minor changes to text for clarity. The key change was the addition to section 7, to include staff attendance for those chosen for the Committee observer programme.

11.2 In discussion, Committee made the following comments: -

- i. There should be a degree of flex in the number of online versus in-person meetings to meet the proposals discussed under item 7 of the day one meeting (new agenda and meeting formats).
- ii. Paragraph 3.2 should be reviewed in light of the changes to meeting papers agreed under item 7 of the day one meeting (new agenda and meeting formats).
- iii. Confidentiality of papers relating to meetings of the Joint committee and Company Board should be reviewed to ensure that JNCC fulfils transparency obligations.

11.3 Joint Committee **discussed** the standing orders for the Joint Committee and Company Board and **agreed** to the change in section 7 (paragraph 7.3). Members agreed that Charles Banner and Tracey Quince should review para 3.2 and delegated to the Chair, sign off of the final document. A final set of standing orders to be circulated to members once agreed.

Action point(s)
AP08 Charles Banner and Tracey Quince to review para 3.2 of the Joint Committee and Company Board Standing Orders in light of the changes to meeting papers agreed under item 7 of the day one meeting (new agenda and meeting formats).
AP09 Pip Day to circulate a final set of standing orders to members once agreed.

## 12. Joint Committee forward programme (Official) (JNCC23 45I)

12.1 Committee noted the forward programme and agreed to change the June 2024 meeting to an in-person meeting, with a hybrid option available. Location to be agreed. It was expected that this would be the first meeting for the newly appointed JNCC Chair.

12.2 Members asked for further consideration to be given to the need post pandemic for online meetings, noting the collaboration, cohesion, and

stakeholder engagement that in-person meetings offered. Members also asked for the Executive to consider rotating Peterborough and Aberdeen meetings annually to allow for engagement with stakeholders in different geographical settings as this would have additional benefits. Members agreed that the balance of in-person/online meeting per year should be discussed once the new Chair of JNCC is appointed.

12.3 The next meeting on 22/23 November will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams. Beyond June 2024, the location of meetings would be decided by the newly constituted Joint Committee.

12.4 Members **noted** the forward programme.

Action point(s)
AP10 Tracey Quince to amend the forward programme and change the June 2024 meeting to an in-person meeting. Location to be agreed.

### 13. Any other business

13.1 No further business was discussed.