The one hundred and forty-eighth meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee held on 15 and 16 September 2026 in York

Paper JNCC 26 50P: Catalysing Climate and Nature Recovery

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Turning science into action for nature, people and the planet.

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Catalysing Climate and Nature Recovery

Paper by Jennifer McNulty, Steve Wilkinson & Dave Stone

1. Pre-amble

1.1 This paper provides an overview of JNCC's developing work under the climate change theme. providing an update from the paper considered by joint Committee in June 2025.

1.2 Joint Committee are asked to:

i. **consider** the proposed approaches (Sect 5) and

ii. **provide a steer** on whether our ambition matches the scale of the challenge

2. Introduction

2.1 JNCC is committed to align action for climate and nature and to 'Minimise the impacts on biodiversity and build resilience' (Global Biodiversity Framework Target 8)[1]. On current policies, we are on track for about 2°C of warming by 2050, and about 3°C by 2100, with the threat of reaching 4°C a distinct possibility, particularly if global tipping points are crossed in nature.

2.2 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) states that 'the extent and magnitude of climate change impacts on nature are greater than previously assessed' with impacts more disruptive, widespread and appearing faster than expected. Changing climatic conditions are disrupting population

[1] Target 8 "*Minimize the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solution and/or ecosystem-based approaches, while minimizing negative and fostering positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity.*"

dynamics, the timing of key biological events, and driving species migrations. 'Species which cannot adapt or move fast enough are at high risk of becoming extinct.' The Climate Change Committee (CCC) stresses that 'if the world warms to '4°C, every second plant or animal species that we know of will be threatened'.

2.3 It remains possible to keep warming globally to well below 2°C, but the window for action is fast closing. Every fraction of a degree of warming prevented is critical. We must be ambitious if we are to avert this scenario, and exploit opportunities to advocate for and generate action capitalising on nature's role in climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

2.4 'There is no route to tackling climate change that does not involve nature, and no pathway to nature recovery that does not take into account climate change.' (Defra, DESNZ, 2025).

3. Background

3.1 In June 2025, we presented a paper and Joint Committee agreed to pursue three critical areas: (i) The aggregation and amplification of nature-based solutions to accelerate critical climate adaptation, mitigation and environmental resilience; (ii) providing evidence and advice on emergent net zero technologies (from mitigating the impacts of renewable and net zero technologies, to understanding the interaction between the environment and proposed marine Carbon Dioxide Removals) in relation to biodiversity, ecosystem function and natural capital; and (iii) work across government to develop a positive nature resilience and security narrative, alongside tackling misinformation where it arises.

3.2 Work is well underway on these priorities, but it has become apparent that JNCC's climate work must evolve to catalyse climate and nature recovery, particularly given the scale and severity of the challenge we face.

4. Opportunity

4.1 JNCC's remit, alongside our relationships with Governments and Partners both Domestic and International, enable us to work and influence at scale. We are well-placed to navigate and integrate work across the Nature, Climate, Resilience and Security nexus. We are uniquely suited to catalyse change across borders and furthermore, to look longer-term, leading work within the horizon scanning and Future Nature spaces.

4.2 Our current approach has predominantly been driven by available funding and remains largely siloed within directorates. Whilst this has generated progress in key areas, a more strategic approach allows us to identify JNCC's 'climate niche', to cultivate influence, and to enhance partnerships and cross-directorate working. Critically, the proposal below will drive understanding of where nature can absorb shocks, adapt to change and catalyse recovery.

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5. Proposal

5.1 We propose that JNCC, as the UK's advisor on nature, should focus on the following:

5.2 **Amplify the nature-climate narrative** - Strengthen our role and voice as an advocate and authority on the relationship between nature, biodiversity and climate change, and how this translates to resilience, food, water and national security (actioning a key recommendation of the IPBES Nexus Assessment, 2024, which warns that progress is currently hampered by siloed approaches, without regards to interlinkages, risking misalignment, trade-offs and unintended consequences). Key partnerships (CCC, DESNZ, the Met Office, etc) must be strengthened to catalyse policy influence, evidence development and international engagement. The UK is underprepared and must prioritise climate adaptation to both current and future impacts. There are significant challenges and opportunities in this space for Nature, which will be explored under priorities 5.3 and 5.5 (alongside 5.4 where nature plays a role in both adaptation and mitigation).

5.3 **Development of future scenarios** - Capitalise on JNCC's broad remit and stakeholder relationships to adopt an innovative, proactive approach; exploring scenarios for recovery which scale action and deliver realistic long-term solutions, alongside considering the anticipated impact of climate change on the natural environment.

5.4 **Evaluation of climate mitigation options** - Track the UK's strategy for reaching Net Zero and the potential reliance on, and implications for, nature, with a particular focus on emergent technologies, alongside key natural carbon stores and processes. Further enhance the evidence base to support this and strengthen JNCC's strategic advice role.

5.5 **Accelerate nature-based solutions** - Help address key policy, funding or evidence gaps to accelerate the uptake of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to support mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. In some cases, there is heavy reliance on expert opinion; building business cases to significantly scale solutions will require stronger empirical evidence.

5.6 Building our relationship with the CCC remains critical. We have an MoU in place and are collaborating on the development and maintenance of a suite of high-level UK indicators, which support a shared narrative across climate adaptation and nature, and which critically enable the monitoring of progress against them. We will collaborate to strengthen the evidence base, particularly with respect to the co-benefits of nature-based solutions. Furthermore, we will seek links and opportunities via our communications to strengthen the promotion of action tackling the climate and nature crises, clearly outlining the interdependencies between the two and tackling misinformation where it arises. As this relationship develops, we have ambitions to engage the CCC on the broader elements of JNCC's climate work, such as the development of future scenarios (section 5.3).

5.7 Success over the 2026-2030 period will be measured by:

i) The identification of JNCC's 'climate niche', with staff working towards key outcomes across the priorities detailed in sections 5.2 - 5.5.

ii) The strength of our partnerships; specifically closer working with DESNZ, Defra and Europe, alongside targeted engagement internationally.

iii) Climate, Nature and National Security work strands coming together telling a coherent story, which can generate action and policy change both domestically and internationally

iv) with JNCC regarded as an authority on nature, climate, resilience and security.

5.8 Joint Committee is asked to **consider** the proposed approaches and provide a steer on whether our ambition matches the scale of the challenge.

6. Risk

6.1 Our proposal aligns with JNCC's risk appetite for 'Together for Nature Implementation and Impact' (Eager). We propose to evolve our work, as detailed below (section 6.1), to achieve 'Organisational Impact' (Risk 4 in SRR) otherwise we risk the implementation and impact of our Together for Nature strategy.

6.2 If the proposal is not adopted, work will continue in an opportunistic, siloed manner, with JNCC chasing funding and being driven by agendas other than our own.

7. Affordability and Delivery

7.1 Through our strategic planning exercise, we have opted to evolve our climate change work, meaning that we do not plan to increase our resource in this thematic area, but we will assess and change our approach to maximise impact. Several strands of climate and nature work have already secured income, with multi-year funding in some cases.

8. Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

8.1 Communication and stakeholder engagement will be fundamental to our plans to catalyse action for climate and nature. These elements will be incorporated and fleshed out as we continue more in-depth planning over the coming months.

8.2 We remain cognizant that Climate Change is likely to rise in prominence across the public consciousness and within political agendas, especially now that significant impacts are being felt within the UK, and a large, potentially record-breaking El Niño is on the horizon. We aim to capitalise on this to accelerate action.

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9. Next Steps

9.1 Staff are working collaboratively to flesh out plans to catalyse Climate and Nature Recovery. We welcome Joint Committee's steer on the scale of our ambition.