



**The one hundred and forty-fourth meeting of the  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee held on 9 and 10 September  
2025 in Peterborough**

**Paper JNCC 25 43I: Annual Report on Sustainability**

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

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## Joint Nature Conservation Committee

### Annual Report on Sustainability

Paper by Natasha Chetina

#### 1. Update on the environmental sustainability of JNCC's operations

- 1.1 JNCC is committed to sustainable working, as outlined in the *Together for Nature 2023–30* strategy. As part of the forward programme, it was discussed that an annual report on environmental sustainability progress would be presented at each Autumn meeting. This paper provides an update on the progress made in this area at JNCC, for members' awareness.

##### **Risk**

- 1.2 Failure to meet environmental management obligations poses a reputational risk to JNCC and is therefore included as an ongoing corporate risk. As an environmental body, it is essential for JNCC to demonstrate responsible organisational behaviour, alongside encouraging others to do the same. Given the current active programme of work and the nature of JNCC's operations, this risk area is considered stable, with a low predicted probability and impact relative to other corporate risks.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 An ARAC drill down on Sustainability was completed by Nigel Reader in Q3 2022-23. Following this, the Sustainability Manager role was established, marking the start of this programme of work.
- 2.2 In August 2024, JNCC's Environmental Management System (EMS) was certified to the ISO 14001 standard. This certification is valid for three years and subject to annual surveillance audits.

### 3. Performance in 2024-25

3.1 **General EMS.** JNCC's EMS, which is under continual improvement, is structured around four key objectives. These are derived from our significant environmental impacts, environmental compliance obligations, and other organisational factors within our control:

- Achieving net zero by 2050 or earlier
- Reducing emissions from business travel
- Minimising the environmental impact of our electronic equipment across its lifecycle (including use)
- Increasing the proportion of goods and services procured with minimal environmental impact across their lifecycle

3.2 **Targets.** Each objective includes both short-term and long-term targets to support its achievement. The short-term targets focus on improving our understanding of emissions within each objective and establishing reliable measurement methods. This foundational work is essential as there is little value in setting reduction targets without first having an accurate picture of our emissions. Our aim is to complete this groundwork within the next 1-2 years. As such, enhancing the quality and quantity of our reporting data was a key focus for 2024-25. We are now well-positioned to set reduction targets for certain emissions categories, such as corporate travel. These targets will align with Defra and broader government goals, while remaining proportionate to JNCC's operations. The long-term targets involve actively reducing emissions in line with the targets we set. This will require changes to operations and culture, alongside ongoing measurement and tracking to monitor progress.

3.3 **Emissions.** Organisational emissions are divided into 3 scopes. Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from owned or controlled sources, Scope 2 are indirect emissions from purchased energy, and Scope 3 are all other indirect emissions across the value chain, such as those from suppliers, transport, and product use. JNCC recorded total emissions of 669 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2024–25, an increase of 409 tonnes (158%) from the previous year. Of the total, 646 tonnes were Scope 3 emissions with 365 coming from business travel and accommodation, 212 tonnes from homeworking and 67 tonnes from commuting. The increase in emissions from 2023-24 is largely due to the newly captured data on homeworking and commuting, but also a rise in business travel emissions due to increased travel and measurement. Notably, this figure does not include supply chain emissions (e.g. purchased goods and services). For 2022–23, Defra estimated these would add a further 1,218 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e based on central spend data.

3.4 **Operations.** Operationally, we have introduced a climate-conscious travel approach in the Travel and Subsistence (T&S) policy, including a ban on mainland UK flights (with specific exemptions) and restrictions on non-economy flights. Given that flights are currently JNCC's largest tracked emissions source, this area has been prioritised for action. Procurement processes are starting to

include sustainability scoring for bidders and are aligned with the Procurement Act 2023 for above-threshold contracts. Guidance on the sustainable use of generative AI has been developed and shared during Microsoft Copilot knowledge sessions. A waste electronic equipment procedure has been implemented for IT equipment (classified as hazardous waste) and is now in active use by the IT team.

- 3.5 **Culture.** JNCC maintains its Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation status (achieved in early 2024) and will continue offering carbon literacy training to all JNCC employees through the Defra group until March 2026. After this, Defra plans to transition to a Civil Service Learning (CSL)-equivalent programme. The JNCC Sustainability Group remains active, with around 25 members contributing flexibly alongside their regular roles. This approach allows individuals to engage with initiatives they are passionate about, ensuring meaningful input. Over the past year, the group has delivered a virtual advent calendar with sustainability tips, organised litter picks, supported the commuting and homeworking survey, and created an engaging sustainability stand at the JNCC conference. Current priorities include developing a corporate sustainable food policy and continuing to produce regular content for the Sustainability section of the JNCC Weekly Update to keep sustainability front of mind for people.

## 4. Governance

- 4.1 All JNCC employees now have mandatory EMS training included in their PMRs, taking place every three years (first cycle in 2024). Quarterly EMS reviews with top management (ExCo and SLT) ensure strong governance. Several employees have volunteered and been trained as internal EMS auditors to ISO 14001 standards - this has supported both Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and broader engagement with the EMS.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Sustainability Manager role remains in place on a permanent basis. While originally focused almost solely on sustainability, the role now also encompasses a broader range of organisational development projects
- 5.2 JNCC continues to maintain its ISO 14001-certified EMS, including: annual internal and external formal audits of compliance, quarterly senior management reviews, all-employee EMS training every three years and continual improvement aligned with EMS objectives. Over the next year, the plan includes setting targets to reduce business travel emissions, gaining a clearer understanding of IT-related emissions, developing general guidance on waste management, and enhancing communication and training around new sustainable procurement processes.
- 5.3 There is a new Greening Government Commitments framework introduced for 2025-30. This year 2025-26 is the baseline data collection year, so it is important to ensure data is as comprehensive and robust as possible. There is greater focus on governance, accountability and link to operational planning and local board oversight. David Collins has volunteered to act as environmental SRO for JNCC.