



The one hundred and thirty-second meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held at 11.00 on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and 09.30 on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at JNCC, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1JY

This paper was provided to the Joint Committee for decision/discussion or information. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for Committee's position on the paper.

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

## Minutes of the 131st meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Confirmed

**Date:** 8 June 2022

**Time:** 11:00

**Venue:** Holiday Inn, 132 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 6UA

### **Present**

#### **Members**

Professor Mel Austen

Independent member

Mr Charles Banner QC

Independent member

Lord Blencathra

Natural England

Ms Cath Denholm

NatureScot

Professor Colin Galbraith

Independent Chair

Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Ms Aoife Martin (Items 7-10)

NatureScot

Professor Tom Meagher

Independent member

Professor Steve Ormerod

Natural Resources Wales

Professor Michael Winter

Natural England

#### **Attendees**

Mr David Collins

JNCC

Professor Chris Collins

Natural Resources Wales

Dr Bethany Graves

JNCC

Dr John Goold

JNCC

Dr Gemma Harper

JNCC

Dr Tim Hill

Natural England

Ms Manaswita Konar

JNCC

Professor Christine Maggs

JNCC

Dr Sara McGuckin

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mrs Tracey Quince

JNCC

Ms Eileen Stuart

NatureScot

Dr Steve Wilkinson

JNCC

## Apologies

### Members

Sir David Henshaw

Natural Resources Wales

Professor Julian Orford

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

### Attendees

Ms Helen Anderson

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr Colin Armstrong

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Ms Ceri Davies

Natural Resources Wales

## 1. Closed session

- 1.1. There are no minutes for this item.

## 2. Chairman's opening remarks

- 2.1. Professor Galbraith welcomed members and attendees to the 131st meeting, which was taking place in-person over two days in Edinburgh. Members approved recording the meeting for minuting purposes and having photographs taken for internal and external use.
- 2.2. Professor Galbraith informed members that the meeting was not quorate until Ms Martin joined. Ms Martin joined from item 8 onwards.

## 3. Declaration of interests

- 3.1. Mr Banner declared his recent work with phosphates and nutrient neutrality advice.
- 3.2. Professor Galbraith advised members that he was now a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.
- 3.3. Professor Austen informed members that she was now a member of the Natural Resources Wales Evidence Advisory Committee.
- 3.4. Professor Galbraith confirmed that none of the new declarations was considered a conflict but emphasised the importance of keeping declarations up to date.
- 3.5. Members were reminded to advise Mrs Elliott of any new declarations.

#### **4. Confidential minutes of the March 2022 Meeting (Official-sensitive) JNCC 22 18D**

- 4.1 Committee **approved** the minutes of the March 2022 meeting as a true record of the meeting.

#### **5. Matters arising (Official-Sensitive) (JNCC 22 19P)**

- 5.1. This item was taken in confidence.

#### **6. Chief Executive's Report on Topical Issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 20P)**

- 6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

#### **7. JNCC overarching strategy (Official-sensitive) JNCC 22 21D**

- 7.1 This item was taken in confidence.

#### **8. Updates from around the UK (Official-Sensitive) (JNCC 22 22P)**

- 8.1 This item was taken in confidence.

#### **9. Report from the Chief Scientists Group (Official-Sensitive) (Oral update)**

- 9.1 This item was taken in confidence.



## Minutes of the 131st meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Confirmed

**Date:** 9 June 2022

**Time:** 09:30

**Venue:** Holiday Inn, 132 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 6UA

### **Present**

#### **Members**

Professor Mel Austen  
Independent member

Mr Charles Banner QC  
Independent member

Lord Blencathra  
Natural England

Ms Cath Denholm  
NatureScot

#### **Attendees**

Mr David Collins  
JNCC

Professor Chris Collins  
Natural Resources Wales

Dr Bethany Graves  
JNCC

Dr John Goold  
JNCC

**Members**

**Professor Colin Galbraith**  
Independent Chair

**Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick**  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

**Ms Aoife Martin (Items 7-10)**  
NatureScot

**Professor Tom Meagher**  
Independent member

**Professor Steve Ormerod**  
Natural Resources Wales

**Professor Michael Winter**  
Natural England

**Attendees**

**Dr Gemma Harper**  
JNCC

**Dr Tim Hill**  
Natural England

**Ms Manaswita Konar**  
JNCC

**Professor Christine Maggs**  
JNCC

**Dr Sara McGuckin**  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**Mrs Tracey Quince**  
JNCC

**Ms Eileen Stuart**  
NatureScot

**Dr Steve Wilkinson**  
JNCC

**Apologies**

**Members**

**Sir David Henshaw**  
Natural Resources Wales

**Professor Julian Orford**  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

**Attendees**

**Ms Helen Anderson**  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**Mr Colin Armstrong**  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**Ms Ceri Davies**  
Natural Resources Wales

## 1. Chairman's opening remarks

- 1.1 Professor Galbraith welcomed members and attendees to day two of the 131st meeting, which was taking place in Edinburgh.
- 1.2 Members approved recording the meeting for minuting purposes.

## 2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 No new declarations were reported. Professor Galbraith emphasised the importance of keeping declarations up to date.
- 2.2 Members were reminded to advise Mrs Elliott of any new declarations.

## 3. UK Nature Recovery (Official-sensitive) JNCC 22 23D

- 3.1. This item was taken in confidence.

## 4. Report from ARAC on 7<sup>th</sup> June (Official) Presentation

- 4.1 In summarising the key issues discussed at the ARAC meeting on 7 March, Mr Banner made the following points:
  - i. All five planned internal audits for 2021/22 were complete. The Communications audit had resulted in substantial assurance with eight low level recommendations to improve compliance with the government functional standard on Communications (GovS-011). ARAC noted the improved customer satisfaction score received by GIAA for this audit.
  - ii. An overall moderate annual opinion had been received for 2021/22 with some improvements required to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control. The executive was content with this rating.
  - iii. The majority of recommendations from audits in 2021/22 audits had been implemented by their agreed due date. Three overdue recommendations were in progress. ARAC discussed progress with these recommendations and were content with the reasons for the delays.
  - iv. Given the issues with the internal audit service throughout 2021/22, ARAC welcomed the commitment of the new Head of Internal Audit to improve the service provided going forward.
  - v. Mr Reader had provided a review of the draft ARA on behalf of ARAC in May. Amendments from this review were incorporated into the final draft. ARAC noted the quality of the Annual Report and Accounts and the hard work by staff involved was acknowledged. A more detailed sustainability report in the ARA was welcomed, but members requested a more comprehensive report for next year. ARAC noted the increase in dilapidations costs for Monkstone House (an increase of £237k) on last year. This was largely due to the age of the building, the length of JNCC's tenure and current market conditions. ARAC agreed to receive a paper providing further details on the dilapidation costs to provide assurance.

- vi. The reputational risk around the current surplus was discussed and noted by the Executive. ARAC recommended that, with the inclusion of the amendments discussed in the meeting, the JNCC Support Co. Board approve the Annual Report and Accounts for 2021/22.
  - vii. NAO had presented their audit completion report and findings from the audit of JNCC's accounts. There were no issues related to management override of controls or indications that income had been inappropriately treated. Two minor recommendations were raised. ARAC welcomed NAO's Completion Report and the draft Letter of Representation and recommended that the CEO sign the Letter of Representation.
  - viii. ARAC received an oral update on the devolution risk drill down which was in progress. Common themes are emerging relating to risk and opportunities for JNCC and the perception of JNCC by countries. A draft report will be discussed by ELT and presented to ARAC in August at the intersessional meeting.
  - ix. The Significant Risks Register for 2022/23 had been discussed. ARAC found the new format helpful in navigating them to key information, but queried the largely green picture of residual risks, in particular the 'People and Place' risk which had been flagged by internal audit as an area of concern last year. Further clarity was required for the next meeting on the meaning of the current rating and its relationship to the target rating. A workshop involving the Executive and two ARAC members was agreed to look at the residual impact ratings to see if these are reduced by the mitigation planned.
  - x. ARAC agreed the final version of their revised Terms of Reference with one minor change and recommended these to the Joint Committee for approval at the intersessional meeting on 25th July. The revisions took account of new responsibilities in relation to financial risks previously undertaken by the Financial Resilience sub-group.
  - xi. Assurance across the organisation at Q4 was good. An online desk and meeting room booking system was now in place and being used by staff working from Monkstone House. Two accidents had been reported in Q4 and one positive case of coronavirus was reported by an individual who had been in one of JNCC's offices. Procedures to advise contacts were followed.
  - xii. In terms of the forward programme, ARAC agreed to add a review of accounting policies and periodic assurance reports around financial resilience to its forward programme.
  - xiii. ARAC agreed that the in-person meeting had been productive and the value of sitting around a table had been noted. ARAC agreed to consider the balance of virtual and in-person meetings going forward.
- 4.2 Committee thanked Mr Banner for an informative presentation and **noted** the update. The importance of balancing the budget to reduce the surplus and pressure on staff was flagged by members. The moderate annual opinion of the Head of Internal Audit was noted, but a challenge back to internal audit would be to ask what substantial looks like.



## 5. ARAC annual report to the Joint Committee (Official-Sensitive) JNCC 22 24P

5.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 6. Reports from Committee sub-groups (Official-sensitive) (Oral)

6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 7. Performance Report for year ended 31 March 2022 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 25D)

7.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 8. Update on the September JNCC Conference (Official) (Oral)

8.1 Dr Harper informed members that the first JNCC in-person staff conference would take place in Newcastle on 29<sup>th</sup> September. An Itinerary will be available in the next few days. The theme is connecting JNCC to deliver nature recovery and 220 attendees had confirmed their attendance. Dr Harper explained that a Covid risk assessment would be completed and wrist bands would be available to indicate if attendees are happy with close contact or not. The conference will include an ice breaker session, strategy and inclusion sessions and team presentations on the work they do. A quiet room would also be available. A dinner is planned with special appearances and goody bags will be available. Dr Harper noted the importance of the event for members to engage with staff. Infographics from the event will be displayed in Inverdee House and Fletton Quays.

8.2 Committee noted the importance of the event and asked the Executive to consider inviting SNCB staff and board members to attend.

Action point(s)
AP12 Dr Harper to consider before the end of June, inviting SNCB staff and board members to the JNCC staff conference in September.

## 9. Joint Committee forward programme (Official) (JNCC 22 26D)

9.1 Committee **confirmed** they were content with the proposed forward programme.

9.2 The next intersessional meeting will take place on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July. This meeting will discuss and agree the revised terms of reference for ARAC, the

September meeting agenda and content of the engagement event and the proposal for a committee observer programme.

- 9.3 The next full Committee meeting will be in-person on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September in Peterborough. A visit for members to Fletton Quays in September might be possible. The building will be available to JNCC in December 2022. A launch date is yet to be agreed.
- 9.4 Lord Blencathra asked that JNCC consider sending a delegation to the FCDO UK-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council meeting in November. Clarification on the date and location of the event should be sought.
- 9.5 Members asked for a link to the video produced for CoP26 by the Overseas Territories on the vision for Healthy Seas. A link to the video is here: - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8keWKNrTb0>.

Action point(s)
AP13 Mr Collins to investigate the possibility of a visit for members to Fletton Quays on 14 <sup>th</sup> or 15 <sup>th</sup> September and if viable arrange the visit with relevant staff.
AP14 Mrs Quince to provide clarification by the end of June on the location and date of the UK-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council meeting in November.

## 10. Any Other Business (Official) (Oral)

- 10.1 No further business was discussed.