



The one hundred and twentieth meeting of the
Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held
at 08.45 on 12 September 2019 at JNCC, Inverdee House, Baxter Street
Aberdeen, AB11 9QA

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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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Matters arising

Paper by Tracey Quince

1. There are no matters arising for this meeting. A report on outstanding action points from previous meetings is attached at Annex 1. All other action points have been discharged.
2. The final list of JNCC's research questions can be found in Annex 2. This discharges action point 2 from the June 2019 meeting.

Annex 1. Action points from Joint Committee meetings

June 2019

<p>5.2 Matters arising (JNCC 19 17) (Official) AP01 Professor Maggs to develop a strategic programme to address common themes emerging from the science audit, in consultation with Committee members.</p>	Professor Maggs	An action plan is being prepared that will address the main themes identified in the science audit. The action plan will also take a risk-based approach to assessing JNCC's science in specific areas (e.g. where there is a high likelihood of external challenge).
<p>5.2 Matters arising (JNCC 19 17) (Official) AP02 Professor Maggs to present the final list of JNCC research questions to the September Joint Committee meeting.</p>	Professor Maggs	Completed. See Annex 2.
<p>6.1 Chief Executive's report on topical issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 18) AP03 Mr Yeo to provide a high-level organogram including staff names.</p>	Mr Yeo	Completed. Included in Chief Executive's update to the September Committee meeting.
<p>6.4 Chief Executive's report on topical issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 18) AP04 Mr Yeo to develop a position statement on JNCC engagement with the Office for Environmental Protection.</p>	Mr Yeo	Completed. Forms part of the paper on EU exit on the September Committee agenda.
<p>9. Annual report from ARAC (Official) (JNCC 19 19) AP05 Mrs Quince to add a contents list to the ARAC annual report for 2019/20.</p>	Mrs Quince	To be progressed April 2020.
<p>10.2 Report from Chief Scientists Group (Official-Sensitive) JNCC 19 20 AP06 Mr Rose to circulate the letter to the NBN Trust Chair to members.</p>	Mr Rose	Completed. Annexed to the September report from the Chief Scientists Group.
<p>10.3 Report from Chief Scientists Group (Official-Sensitive) JNCC 19 20 AP07 Professor Maggs to provide a decision paper on</p>	Professor Maggs	Because of changing circumstances, a paper on future options for engagement with the NBN Trust has not been prepared

NBN for the September meeting.		for the September Committee meeting. An inter-agency working group will develop proposals on key issues relating to the NBN Trust and biological recording with the aim of presenting options to the CSG by the end of the calendar year. Discussion with Committee will follow.
12.3 JNCC Business Plan for 2019/20 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 22) AP08 Mr Brooks to amend the business plan to reflect comments made by Committee members and communicate the revised plan internally to staff and externally to stakeholders.	Mr Brooks	Completed
12.2 ii JNCC Business Plan for 2019/20 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 22) AP09 Professor Austen to provide Mr Brooks with some revised wording on marine protected areas for the business plan.	Professor Austen	Completed
12.2 iii JNCC Business Plan for 2019/20 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 22) AP10 Mr Hill to send a copy of Natural England's business plan to Mr Brooks.	Dr Hill	Completed
14.3 Update on JNCC's EU exit activities (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 24) AP11 Mr Nichols to circulate to Committee members more detail on the four themes contained in paragraph 4.2 of the paper.	Mr Nichols	Completed
17.3 International reporting (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 27) AP12 International Reporting Sub-Group to consider the most suitable approach for Committee input to international reports and report back to the September Committee meeting.	International Sub-Group (Steve Ormerod/James Williams)	In progress. Oral update at the September meeting.

18.3 Article 12 Birds Directive report (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 28) AP13 International Reporting Sub-Group to consider the need for further action in relation to the Birds Directive report.	International Sub-Group (Steve Ormerod/James Williams)	In progress. Oral update at the September meeting.
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Annex 2. JNCC research questions

Introduction

Since the last proposal of draft science questions to the Joint Committee in June 2018, it has been decided that the policy pitches from the nature conservation conference would not in general be helpful in refining the list of JNCC research questions for interacting with the academic community. In terms of attracting academic partnerships, JNCC is now involved in six successful Doctoral Training Partnerships and one Centre for Doctoral Training, and is represented in two new Earth Observations proposals now being evaluated by UKRI. JNCC's first successful CASE-sponsored student will start in September at Aberdeen University and Queen's University Belfast, with a project on the natural capital value of MPAs. These partnerships are providing a high profile for JNCC's research needs, as universities respond to the impact agenda. The recent changes to UKRI mean that it is now much more focussed on delivering policy-relevant information and attracting industrial investment. JNCC was part of a consortium proposing a NERC highlight topic on seabirds and alternative energy generation – these highlight topic are competitive, and this may give rise to a future funding programme.

The new JNCC website will provide a platform to advertise JNCC's research needs to the academic world, as well as to other potential research partners. Furthermore, the climate change agenda, particularly in the marine environment, has become even more significant with more urgent research questions. We propose that a set of questions will be presented on the website and supplemented by blogs on current research topics that would be of interest to JNCC's ongoing work.

Exemplar research questions

Conceptual ecological models of benthic marine habitats are widely used for modelling future and existing real-world scenarios. How can we test and validate these models?

The types of projects that could provide research relevant to JNCC's needs include meta-analyses that identify relevant datasets, and empirical case studies validating particular models in various marine environments on different temporal and spatial scales.

Marine Protected Areas and climate change mitigation: what types of existing or new evidence are needed to evaluate or demonstrate the potential contribution of MPAs to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions?

The types of projects that could provide research relevant to JNCC's needs include meta-analyses that identify relevant datasets internationally, with particular focus on international equivalents of Highly Protected Marine Areas. Experimental projects that focus on disturbance and protection of marine habitats would be of potential importance. Given the significance of fishing impacts to benthic communities, detailed analyses of responses of seabed communities, including their carbon budgets, to different types of fishing could fill a major knowledge gap.

DNA metabarcoding data could provide rapid advances for understanding ecosystem function in marine, terrestrial and freshwater habitats. How can a clearer understanding of the metrics of ecosystem function be developed? What type of metrics might it use and how can proxies be developed?

Projects addressing conceptual aspects of this question, as well as potential empirical studies on particular ecosystems or habitats would all be in scope.

How can we successfully integrate conservation or ecosystem service objectives into future urban development?

It is fundamental that we better understand how species' distributions are influenced by patterns of urban landscape composition and configuration, where there are current serious knowledge gaps.

Government policies are increasingly aiming to restore and protect wildlife while also enhancing a range of ecosystem services, for example societal benefits associated with increased public access to green space (wellbeing). What types of metrics would be required to demonstrate environmental "net gain"? Is net gain actually possible?

Research exploring metrics associated with natural capital and ecosystem services, for all habitats and ecosystems, can help to clarify how we might demonstrate success of goals such as net gain.