



Joint Nature Conservation Committee 120th Meeting Minutes Confirmed

Date: 12 September 2019

Time: 08.45

Venue: JNCC, Inverdee House, Baxter Street, Aberdeen, AB11 9QA

Present

Professor Mel Austen
Independent member

Mr Charles Banner
Independent member

Professor Ian Bateman
Independent member

Lord Blencathra
Natural England

Ms Cath Denholm
Scottish Natural Heritage

Professor Colin Galbraith
Independent member

Professor Chris Gilligan
Independent Chair

Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Professor Stephen Ormerod
Natural Resources Wales

Professor Marian Scott
Independent member

In attendance

Mr Colin Armstrong
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Mr Chris Brooks
JNCC

Mr Mike Evans
Natural Resources Wales

Dr John Goold
JNCC

Rebecca Konijnenberg (Item 14)
JNCC

Professor Christine Maggs
JNCC

Mr Bev Nichols (Item 14)
JNCC

Ms Emer O'Connor (Item 12)
JNCC

Mrs Tracey Quince
JNCC

Mrs Sally Thomas
Scottish Natural Heritage

Dr Steve Wilkinson
JNCC

Dr James Williams (item 7)
JNCC

Dr Clare Whitfield (Item 14)
JNCC

Mr Marcus Yeo
JNCC

Apologies

Members

Dr Mike Cantlay
Scottish Natural Heritage

Sir David Henshaw
Natural Resources Wales

Professor Michael Winter
Natural England

Attendees

Ms Helen Anderson
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Ms Ceri Davies
Natural Resources Wales

Dr Sara McGuckin
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Dr Tim Hill
Natural England

Mr Paul Rose
JNCC

1. Closed session

1.1 There are no minutes for this item.

2. Chairman's opening remarks

- 2.1 Professor Gilligan welcomed everyone to the 120th meeting.
- 2.2 Members held a minute's silence for Professor Howard Platt who had passed away recently. Members paid tribute to Howard's work in nature conservation which had spanned many years.
- 2.3 Professor Gilligan reflected on the engagement event with SNH the previous day, noting the high-quality of the presentations.
- 2.4 Since the last meeting in June, there had been a number of ministerial changes in Defra. Rebecca Pow MP is a new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment. Zac Goldsmith MP is Minister of State for International Environment and Animal Welfare, with responsibilities shared between Defra and DFID.
- 2.5 Professor Gilligan informed members that the recent JNCC ministerial review meeting had been with Sonia Phippard (Director General in Defra), as the minister was unavailable. The meeting had been positive with Ms Phippard noting the effectiveness of the Joint Committee and the importance of JNCC's relationships with the devolved administrations.
- 2.6 Members were informed that Mr Edward Barker (Director of Natural Environment) and Ms Natasha Lewis had been identified as lead contacts for

JNCC in Defra. Ms Lewis was planning to attend the Joint Committee meeting in November.

- 2.7 Dr Wilkinson had recently been appointed Director of Ecosystem Evidence and Advice in JNCC. He gave members a brief résumé of his experience.
- 2.8 Professor Maggs informed members of a recent trip to Brazil. Professor Maggs had been invited by the British Council as keynote speaker for a policy dialogue on Women in Science.

3. Declaration of interests

- 3.1 Two new declarations were made by Professors Scott and Austen. None represented a conflict for this meeting.
- 3.2 Members were reminded to keep their declarations up to date.

4. Confidential minutes of the March 2019 meeting (JNCC 19 33)

- 4.1 The minutes of the June meeting were confirmed, with one minor amendment, Ms Sara McGuckin to be amended to Dr Sara McGuckin.

5 Matters arising (JNCC 19 34)

- 5.1 There were no matters arising for this meeting. The Committee **noted** the report of outstanding actions in Annex 1.
- 5.2 A revised list of research questions was presented in Annex 2. Professor Maggs informed members that these would be available on the JNCC website and would be used in external discussions to create opportunities for partnerships.
- 5.3 In relation to the question on net gain, Professor Bateman agreed to share a draft of a paper on the environmental improvement and social well-being.
- 5.4 The Committee thanked Professor Maggs for finalising the research questions, noting they would continue to evolve over time.

Action point(s)
AP01 Professor Bateman to share the draft paper on environmental improvement and social well-being with Professors Maggs and Gilligan.

6 Chief Executive's report on topical issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 35)

- 6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

7 Report from International Reporting Sub-Group (Official) (Oral report)

- 7.1 Professor Ormerod, Chair of the International Reporting Sub-Group, gave an update on recent activity.
- 7.2 The Sub-Group had met on 29 July. The Sub-Group had discussed its role and purpose going forward, agreeing it should continue into 2020 when the next Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity would be held. The Sub-Group had agreed that it would comment on international reports at the same stage as consultees. Substantial key messages would be reported to the Joint Committee.
- 7.3 The Committee **noted** the report and agreed there was a compelling case for the Sub-Group to continue its work into 2020. The Committee agreed to receive oral reports from the Sub-Group with written reports as required.

8. Report from Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Sub-Group (Oral report)

- 8.1. Professor Austen, Chair of the MPA Sub-Group, noted that the Sub-Group had not met since the Joint Committee meeting in June. She noted the valuable contribution to the Sub-Group made by Professor Platt before his recent illness.
- 8.2 Upcoming work that would require input from the Sub-Group includes:
 - i. post-consultation advice on deep sea reserves in Scotland; and
 - ii. Marine Conservation Zones in Welsh offshore waters.
- 8.3 The Committee **noted** the report of the Sub-Group and asked for a brief note of future work to be drawn up which would be circulated to members. It was also timely for the Sub-Group to consider its membership.

Action point(s)
AP03 Dr Goold to draw up a note of the MPA Sub-Group's future work and circulate to Joint Committee members.

9. Report from ARAC (Official-Sensitive) (Oral)

- 9.1. This item was taken in confidence.

Action point(s)
AP04 ARAC to undertake an assessment of the risks associated with legal challenge.

10 Report from Chief Scientists Group (Official-Sensitive) JNCC 19 36

10.1. This item was taken in confidence.

11 External factors affecting JNCC (Official) (JNCC 19 37)

11.1 Mr Yeo introduced the item and invited comments.

11.2 Lord Blencathra informed members that there was likely to be pressure from the Treasury for Defra to rationalise environmental organisations post Brexit.

11.3 Ms Denholm reported that SNH was a member of a new Scottish Government programme board on biodiversity. SNH is working on a climate change commitment statement. [The Scottish Government's Protecting Scotland's Future: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2019-2020](#) included the legislative programme for the next parliamentary year. The programme includes 14 new bills with five directly involving SNH.

11.4 Dr Kirkpatrick reported that there was still no government in Northern Ireland following the collapse of the power-sharing agreement. Dr Kirkpatrick informed members that a new Deputy Chair for CNCC could not be appointed until a minister was in place. Professor Gilligan and Dr Kirkpatrick would discuss a replacement for Professor Platt on the Joint Committee.

11.5 Professor Ormerod informed members that Sir David Henshaw had been selected as the preferred candidate for the role of Natural Resources Wales Chair. He reported on a forthcoming marine evidence conference at Swansea University, arranged to support the launch of the Welsh Marine Evidence Strategy. The Welsh Government is working on the first Welsh National Marine Plan which sets out policy for the next 20 years for the sustainable use of our seas.

11.6 Professor Galbraith reminded members of the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Glasgow on 9-19 November 2020. The Committee noted the need to be ambitious in this area and the importance of a JNCC presence at the conference, including the opportunities for side events. There was also an opportunity for the UK nature conservation agencies collectively to showcase work on the links between biodiversity and climate change.

- 11.7 Mr Yeo agreed that JNCC staff would prepare an information note on the climate change COPs occurring in 2019 and 2020 for the next Joint Committee teleconference in October. A discussion paper on JNCC's climate change activities would be presented to the November Committee meeting.
- 11.8 Professor Austen informed members of opportunities for JNCC to make bids under the UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF). Professor Austen agreed to share links to various documents with Professor Maggs to enable her to produce a list of potential project areas to discuss further with Professors Austen and Bateman.
- 11.9 In conclusion, the Committee **noted** the reports from around the table and acknowledged the value of being kept well briefed.

Action point(s)

AP05 Mr Yeo to produce an information note on the next two climate change COPs for the Joint Committee teleconference in October.

AP06 Ms Quince to add climate change to the agenda for the November Committee meeting.

AP07 Professor Austen to share links to SPF documents with Professor Maggs to enable her to produce a list of potential project areas to discuss further with Professors Austen and Bateman.

12 Performance report for Q1 2019/20 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 38)

- 12.1 This item was taken in confidence.

Action point(s)

AP08 Mr Brooks to produce key headlines on website engagement for inclusion in future quarterly performance reports.

AP09 Mr Brooks and Mr Banner to discuss engagement with key stakeholders to identify refinements to the website.

13 An update on income generation within JNCC (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 42)

- 12.1 This item was taken in confidence.

14 Update on JNCC's EU Exit Day 1 Readiness (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 39)

14.1 This item was taken in confidence.

15 EU Exit – future priorities for JNCC (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 40)

15.1 This item was taken in confidence.

16 Spending Review and Business Plan (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 41)

16.1 This item was taken in confidence.

17 Forward Programme (Official) (JNCC 19 43)

17.1 Members discussed the forward programme and agreed to add an item on climate change and the natural environment to the November agenda.

17.2 The November meeting would include a strategy workshop on the afternoon of 27 November. Staff ideas on future objectives would be collated prior to the workshop.

17.3 Committee **noted** the forward programme.

18 Any other business

18.1 No further business was discussed. The next meeting of the Joint Committee would be in JNCC's offices in Peterborough on 28 November.