



Joint Nature Conservation Committee 121st Meeting Minutes Confirmed

Date: 28 November 2019	Time: 08.45
Venue: JNCC, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1JY	

Present

Professor Mel Austen
Independent member

Mr Charles Banner
Independent member

Professor Ian Bateman
Independent member

Lord Blencathra
Natural England

Professor Colin Galbraith
Independent member

Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Professor Marian Scott
Independent member

Professor Michael Winter
Natural England

In attendance

Mr Chris Brooks
JNCC

Ms Julie Day (Item 14)
JNCC

Mr Mike Evans
Natural Resources Wales

Dr John Goold
JNCC

Dr Tim Hill
Natural England

Dr Sara McGuckin
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Professor Christine Maggs
JNCC

Mr Bev Nichols (Item 15)
JNCC

Ms Emer O'Connor (Item 12)
JNCC

Mrs Tracey Quince
JNCC

Mr Paul Rose
JNCC

Mrs Sally Thomas
Scottish Natural Heritage

Dr Steve Wilkinson

JNCC

Dr James Williams (item 8)
JNCC

Mr Marcus Yeo
JNCC

Apologies

Members

Dr Mike Cantlay
Scottish Natural Heritage

Ms Cath Denholm
Scottish Natural Heritage

Professor Chris Gilligan
Independent Chair

Sir David Henshaw
Natural Resources Wales

Professor Stephen Ormerod
Natural Resources Wales

Attendees

Ms Helen Anderson
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Mr Colin Armstrong
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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 everyone to the 121st meeting and advised that the meeting was not quorate. Members were advised that approval of decision papers on the agenda would take place via email after the meeting.

3. Declaration of interests

- 3.1 One new declaration was made by Professor Scott, who advised that she was now a member of the Scottish Science Advisory Committee. This did not represent a conflict for this meeting.
- 3.2 Members were reminded to keep their declarations up to date.

4. Confidential minutes of the September 2019 meeting (JNCC 19 44)

- 4.1 The minutes of the June meeting were discussed with no amendments. **As the meeting was inquorate, the Committee confirmed the minutes via email correspondence after the meeting.**

5 Matters arising (JNCC 19 45)

- 5.1 There were no matters arising for this meeting. The Committee **noted** the report of outstanding actions in Annex 1.
- 5.2 Mr Banner gave an update on Action Point 9 of the September meeting relating to engagement with key stakeholders to identify refinements to the website. The establishment of an informal focus group for users of the website was felt to be premature at the current stage of moving content from the old to the new website. This action has been put on hold until the end of 2020.

6 Chief Executive's report on topical issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 46)

- 6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

Action point(s)
AP01 Communications Team to consider inviting media environment correspondents into JNCC to raise JNCC's profile in the media.

7 Report from ARAC on 27 November (Official)

- 7.1 In summarising the key issues discussed at the ARAC meeting on 27 November, Professor Galbraith informed the Committee that:
- i. ARAC had undertaken a strategy session and had agreed a small number of changes to the way it operates. ARAC would keep a watching brief over the developing JNCC strategy;
 - ii. a 3-year programme of risk drill downs had been agreed for all significant risk areas. ARAC and Joint Committee members would be approached to lead the drill downs;

- iii. an advisory audit on the assurance framework had been discussed. ARAC were content with the findings. ARAC discussed the potential for internal audit to take assurance from the work of other providers;
 - iv. the external audit strategy and Annual Report and Accounts timetable for 2019/20 had been agreed. The cost of external audit would increase by £4k but management and ARAC were content with the justification for this increase;
 - v. funding risks had increased due to likely pressures on grant-in-aid budgets in 2020/21. Legal risks had been evaluated and a legal advice contract with Browne Jacobson was now in place;
 - vi. assurance across the organisation at quarter 2 was good. Work to improve assurance in the business continuity area was underway;
 - vii. a paper on evaluating how management obtain value for money from single tenders had been discussed. ARAC had commented on changes to the single tender approval form and had asked management to check the public contracts regulation threshold;
 - viii. preparations for the annual risk management paper in March 2020 and the ARAC Annual Report due in June 2020 had been discussed and a steer given on content and format;
 - ix. some minor changes to the ARAC terms of reference had been agreed with changes to be approved by the Joint Committee intersessionally; and
 - x. ARAC were pleased to note that leader level accreditation had been achieved under the disability confident scheme, that internal audits on four evidence quality assurance projects had been undertaken in-house and that JNCC was pursuing an ISO14001 stage 1 assessment on environmental performance.
- 7.2 Mr Banner informed the Committee that he and Mr Yeo had met twice since the last meeting to drill down into legal risks from a direct and indirect perspective. Mr Banner asked that country conservation body members keep JNCC informed of any legal challenges they were subject to, where there was an indirect challenge to JNCC's advice or where there was an interpretation of JNCC documentation.

8. Reports from Committee sub-groups: MPA; International Reporting; Wider Markets (Official)

- 8.1 Professor Austen, Chair of the MPA Sub-Group, noted that the Sub-Group had not met since the Joint Committee meeting in September. The next meeting would take place in February, when the main discussion topic would be post-consultation advice on deep sea reserves in Scotland. Committee asked for a briefing note on the consultation response.
- 8.2 The Committee noted the work of the Defra group on highly protected marine areas led by Richard Benyon. Members agreed it would be helpful for the sub-group to consider JNCC's potential role in this area, taking into account work on highly protected areas in the Overseas Territories.
- 8.3 Dr Williams gave a brief oral update on behalf of Professor Ormerod, Chair of the International Reporting Sub-Group. He advised Committee that work on the report to the Convention on Migratory Species was ongoing. Dr Williams agreed to circulate key messages from the report when they are available to the Sub-Group. Looking forward, the next substantial report is for the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention). This report is due in January 2021, with a focus on wetland inventories.
- 8.4 Dr Williams noted that the draft Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 report was now open for review, and that a revised set of UK biodiversity indicators would be published in summer 2020. Mrs Thomas noted that a Scottish report on progress towards the Aichi Targets would be published in 2020.
- 8.5 Mr Banner informed members that the Wider Markets Sub-Group had met the previous day. The Sub-Group had adopted a new statement of purpose. The Sub-Group would re-visit the income strategy as the overall JNCC strategy develops. The Committee agreed that the Sub-Group was a useful forum for discussing income opportunities and in helping to mitigate any risks around new income streams.
- 8.6 The Committee noted the valuable work of its Sub-Groups.

Action point(s)
AP02 Dr Goold to prepare a briefing note on the consultation response on deep sea reserves in Scotland.

9 Report from Chief Scientists Group (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 47)

- 9.1 This item was taken in confidence.

10 External factors affecting JNCC (Official) (JNCC 19 48)

- 10.1 Mr Yeo introduced the item and invited comments.
- 10.2 Dr Kirkpatrick reported that there was still no government in Northern Ireland following the collapse of the power-sharing agreement. Dr Kirkpatrick explained that members of CNCC were currently being given 6 monthly extensions to their terms. Mr Banner noted that the current legislation giving powers to civil servants in Northern Ireland ends in January and there was a risk that replacement legislation would be delayed.
- 10.3 Professor Winter informed members that interviews for new Natural England Board members would take place in January. Budget pressures remained, with risks to the execution of statutory duties. A new mission and vision are currently being worked up. An assessment of the election manifestos had been undertaken.
- 10.4 Mr Evans reported that NRW's financial settlement for 2020/21 was still unclear and discussions with Welsh Government were ongoing. An interim second State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) was due at the end of December. Mr Evans agreed to circulate the interim report to the Committee once it was published.
- 10.5 Mrs Thomas reported that SNH were re-branding to become NatureScot from 1 May 2020. The legal entity would remain SNH. Scottish Government are hosting a workshop under the Convention on Biological Diversity in April 2020, in preparation for the Conference of Parties in China later in the year. [Climate change commitments](#) set out by SNH are now available online, with an action plan expected in the new year. Scottish Government had recently made available an additional £2 million for the Biodiversity Challenge Fund. A consultation on general licences had recently closed.
- 10.6 Professor Bateman informed members that the Natural Capital Committee's Annual Report would be published in the New Year.
- 10.7 Professor Austen informed members of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on oceans and the cryosphere.
- 10.8 In conclusion, the Committee **noted** the reports from around the table and acknowledged the value of being kept well briefed.

Action point(s)
AP03 Mr Evans to circulate to the Committee, the interim second State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR).

11 Performance report for Q2 2019/20 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 49)

11.1 This item was taken in confidence.

Action point(s)
AP04 Mr Brooks to share JNCC stress management practices with SNH.

12 Business Plan for 2020/21 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 50)

12.1 This item was taken in confidence.

13 JNCC strategy in relation to Climate Change (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 51)

13.1 This item was taken in confidence.

Action point(s)
AP05 Dr Wilkinson to convene a meeting with the country nature conservation bodies to co-ordinate an approach for COP26.

14 Development of a new JNCC Terrestrial Biodiversity Evidence Strategy (Official-Sensitive) (JNCC 19 52)

14.1 This item was taken in confidence.

15 Update on JNCC's EU Exit Day 1 Readiness (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 53)

15.1 This item was taken in confidence.

16 Joint Committee Forward Programme (Official) (JNCC 19 54)

- 16.1 Committee **noted** the forward programme and asked that dates of future meetings be circulated.

Action point(s)
AP06 Ms Elliott to circulate meeting dates to members and attendees.

17 Any other business

- 17.1 Professor Galbraith thanked Professor Bateman for leading a Natural Capital workshop for staff and members later that day.
- 17.2 The next meeting of the Joint Committee would be at the Felix Hotel in Cambridge on Thursday 12 March 2020.