



The one hundred and twenty-ninth meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held at 11.00 on 1 December 2021 and 09.30 on 2 December 2021 virtually via Microsoft Teams

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.

To view other Joint Committee papers and minutes visit <https://jncc.gov.uk/about-jncc/who-we-are/joint-committee/>

To find out more about JNCC visit <https://jncc.gov.uk/about-jncc/who-we-are/>

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Proposals for improving engagement between Joint Committee and staff

Cover Note by Amanda Gregory, Alison Littlewood and Lynn Heeley

Executive Summary

1. Action required

- 1.1. The Joint Committee is invited to **review** and **approve** the proposed staff engagement activities presented in the Annex to this paper.
- 1.2. **Suggest** and **agree** any further proposals not already included in this paper.
- 1.3. **Discuss and agree** the desired approach for a JNCC Joint Committee Observer Programme: specifically, the purpose of the programme and the expectations for the role, behaviour and outputs

2. Key issues

- 2.1. This paper summarises the proposed activities arising from the engagement event, which took place on 15 September 2021, to explore options for enhancing the interactions between Joint Committee and staff.
- 2.2. Further ideas have been added by the Authors.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Proposals for improving engagement between Joint Committee and staff

Paper by Amanda Gregory, Alison Littlewood and Lynn Heeley

1. Introduction

- 1.1. An engagement event took place on 15 September 2021, with Joint Committee and JNCC staff representatives tasked with exploring options for enhancing the interactions between Joint Committee and staff.
- 1.2. In hosting this workshop, the Joint Committee recognised the aspiration for an improved mutual understanding of the respective (and complementary) roles and responsibilities of the executive and non-executive. Joint Committee acknowledged that engaging with staff offers a two-way dialogue that can contribute to strategy development, effective governance and to the long-term success of JNCC.
- 1.3. The workshop was tasked with identifying practical activities that can be implemented at reasonable resource cost and monitored by the Joint Committee for their effectiveness.
- 1.4. Several of the proposed activities have been tried before and some of these have proved successful. It is therefore recommended that these are continued (e.g. sharing official papers openly with staff, staff attendance at Joint Committee and market stall or masterclass sessions). Other proposals from the engagement event have already been implemented (e.g. organogram, Joint Committee member biographies and vlog following Joint Committee meetings).
- 1.5. This paper provides a summary of the proposed activities (together with some additional ideas from the authors of this paper) which could be further developed into an action plan. It also includes options for a JNCC Observer Programme, to ensure the Joint Committee and ELT hold themselves to account to JNCC's values and provide authentic, inclusive, and collaborative leadership.

2. Proposed activities

- 2.1. The proposed activities have been grouped together under the following three themes for consideration: 'building relationships', 'understanding expertise' and 'formal engagement'.
- 2.2. The proposed activities within the 'building relationships' theme comprises informal suggestions and opportunities for staff and Joint Committee Members to get to know one another. These include coffee mornings, drop-ins, anonymous questions, working from a JNCC office, attending the staff conference, attending open meetings and team meetings.

- 2.3. An additional suggestion, within this theme, is to create a short staff Joint Committee engagement survey which could act as a useful measure of the success of the programme of activities.
- 2.4. The 'understanding expertise' theme groups together the proposed activities that focus on opportunities to share knowledge and expertise between staff and Joint Committee Members. These include annual staff training, regular updates on activities, deep-dives, master classes and clinics as well as inclusion of Joint Committee Member expertise to discuss papers and developments as a critical friend and as peer review specialists within the EQA process.
- 2.5. The proposed activities under the 'formal engagement' theme include information about Joint Committee within staff induction, sharing papers more widely and inviting comments ahead of sessions. This theme also includes an observer programme and opportunity for Joint Committee Member representation at key events and for key projects.
- 2.6. The proposal for an observer programme at Joint Committee Meetings will be detailed in the following section

3. Observer Programme

- 3.1. One of the actions arising from the workshop, also included in the organisational development programme and as a risk mitigation in the Significant Risks Register, is to implement an Observer Programme for Committee meetings. An Observer Programme could take various forms and the Joint Committee is requested to provide some guidance with respect to roles and responsibilities and practical implementation options.
- 3.2. In drawing up these proposals, it has been assumed that the more formal Observer Programme will run alongside the existing informal arrangements which permit staff to sit in on discussions on an ad hoc basis.
- 3.3. To facilitate role out of the Programme the Joint Committee is asked to consider the following aspects of implementation:

3.3.1. Purpose of the Observer Programme

Firstly, it is necessary to agree the purpose of the Observer Programme, which is proposed as follows:

- i. to ensure the Joint Committee and ELT hold themselves to account to JNCC's values and provide authentic, inclusive, and collaborative leadership.
- ii. to improve levels of transparency
- iii. to encourage a diverse, active and engaged network of staff and emerging leaders by enabling individuals to have first-hand exposure to the role of the Joint Committee, its decision-making and operations thereby facilitating greater understanding of respective responsibilities and opportunities for closer engagement.

3.3.2. Role and Terms of participation

Secondly, it is necessary to decide what is and isn't expected of a member of staff who takes up the position of an Observer and how this opportunity differs from the existing informal arrangements for staff to sit in on meetings.

3.3.3. Eligibility

- i. application to be an observer should be voluntary (*potentially Teams could be requested to appoint observer following EOI?*)
- ii. observers should represent a spread of grades and Teams (*may want to consider limiting this given access to closed meetings & official-sensitive papers?*)
- iii. membership of the programme should be limited in number (*for practical and logistical reasons*)

3.3.4. Format

An observer will:

- i. attend meetings and monitor discussions in an observer capacity only (unless invited to speak)
- ii. subscribe to the Joint Committee mailing list and have access to papers (including Official-Sensitive?)
- iii. participate in Q&A sessions (when invited)
- iv. tasked with submitting anonymous questions to the Joint Committee on behalf of Team? [Assuming proposal 5 in Table in Annex 1 accepted]
- v. provide feedback to individual Teams on (non-confidential) Joint Committee discussions

3.3.5. Length of Term

- i. an observer will be expected to commit to a specific term (potentially 1 year) and
- ii. attend at least 3 Committee meetings throughout their term

3.3.6. Confidentiality

- i. invitation extended to closed sessions and Official-Sensitive papers
- ii. Staff included in the Observer Programme must not breach confidentiality rules

Annex 1: Proposals for improving engagement between Joint Committee and staff.

The following table lists the proposals summarised in this document. They are split into three themes for ease of consideration and have been assigned an initial timescale related to ease of implementation, these are: S (short-term), M (medium-term) or L (longer term).

ID	Proposal	Origin of proposal	Theme	Timescale
1	Committee Members to attend Staff Open meetings (to introduce themselves and feedback on their work)	Engagement event	Building relationships	S
2	Committee Members to attend Team meetings (where topics relevant)	Engagement event	Building relationships	S
3	Committee Members to attend staff conference in September 2022	Engagement event	Building relationships	S
4	All staff Joint Committee engagement survey (to gather pulse and any other proposals)	Authors	Building relationships	S
5	Committee Meeting slot for anonymous questions from staff	Authors	Building relationships	S
6	Provide opportunities for Committee Members to work from a JNCC office	Authors	Building relationships	S
7	Coffee mornings with Committee Members	Engagement event	Building relationships	M
8	Informal topical drop-in sessions with Committee Members for staff	Engagement event	Building relationships	M
9	Annual staff training on all things Committee	Authors	Understanding expertise	S
10	Annually updated presentation of work per Team	Authors	Understanding expertise	S/M
11	Regular updates from Committee for staff on what they are doing - blogs, monthly news, etc	Engagement event	Understanding expertise	S/M
12	Use Committee's expertise to discuss papers / developments	Engagement event	Understanding expertise	M
13	Deep dives (in-depth discussion around subject)	Engagement event	Understanding expertise	M
14	Use of Committee as Critical Friend	Engagement event	Understanding expertise	M
15	Master classes/ clinic from Committee Members on certain topics as needed	Engagement event	Understanding expertise	M

16	Quarterly, high level summary of key staff work areas (with very short description and named contact)	Authors	Understanding expertise	M
17	Include clear opportunities for utilising Committee Members as specialist peer review in EQA process	Authors	Understanding expertise	L
18	Information about Committee (video) during staff induction	Engagement event	Formal engagement	S
19	Share papers more widely and invite comments to be considered in the decisions	Engagement event	Formal engagement	S
20	Allow more time for staff to prepare Committee papers and simplify the writing of papers	Authors	Formal engagement	S
21	Opportunity planning of annual events for Committee Member representation	Authors	Formal engagement	M/L
22	Opportunity planning for promoting key projects for Committee representation	Authors	Formal engagement	M/L
23	Ensure succession planning as Members change	Authors	Formal engagement	M/L