



The one hundred and twenty-fourth meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held at 08.45 on 24 September 2020 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.

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Update on JNCC's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

Cover Note by Marcus Yeo

Executive Summary

1. Action required

1.1. The Joint Committee is asked to **discuss** the update provided in the paper.

2. Key issues

2.1. This paper provides a summary of JNCC's response to Covid-19.

2.2. The risks associated with Covid-19 will be discussed by ARAC at their meeting on 23 September and the main points will be reported to the Joint Committee on the following day.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Update on JNCC's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

Paper by Marcus Yeo

1. JNCC staff have been predominantly working from home for nearly six months.
2. The second floor of Monkstone House has been reopened and a small number of staff based in Peterborough who are unable to work effectively from home have returned to the office. The office is also starting to be used for small meetings. Consideration is being given to opening up the third floor of Monkstone House and allowing more people to work from the office, at least occasionally. However, under current restrictions the maximum capacity of Monkstone House is only 20% of normal.
3. Inverdee House in Aberdeen remains closed and there is no definite timetable for reopening it. No Aberdeen staff have reported any issues meaning they cannot work from home.
4. We are keeping a close eye on staff wellbeing. The main concerns being expressed are heavy workloads and the effects of prolonged remote working on interactions with colleagues. ELT is taking action to address these concerns and are talking regularly to trade union representatives.
5. Looking to the longer term, JNCC's flexible working policy is being reviewed so that we can provide clarity about how the organisation will operate in the future and the balance between office-based and home working. This will have implications for the proposed move to Fletton Quays in Peterborough.
6. In general, JNCC staff have been able to work effectively from home since the start of the pandemic. However, Covid has had wide-ranging effects on delivery for a variety of reasons, including reduced staff capacity within JNCC and externally driven delays. Details are provided in the performance report for quarter 1 (paper 20 36). Work is being rescheduled as appropriate.
7. JNCC continues to advise government on the links between zoonotic diseases, such as coronavirus, and global nature conservation. A project to determine the zoonosis risks potentially arising from CITES trade (discussed by the Committee at the videoconference on 13 August) is underway.
8. UK and devolved governments are all developing and implementing 'green recovery' plans. JNCC is contributing in various ways both within the UK and internationally (for example, by providing evidence and advice on natural capital and ecosystem services).