



Joint Nature Conservation Committee 117th Meeting Minutes Confirmed

Date: 29 November 2018

Time: 08.45

Venue: Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1JY

Present

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 (via telephone)

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

Professor Michael Winter
Natural England

In attendance

Mr Bev Nichols
JNCC

Chris Brooks
JNCC

Mr Mike Evans
Natural Resources Wales

Dr Steve Gibson
JNCC

Dr John Goold
JNCC

Dr Tim Hill
Natural England

Professor Christine Maggs
JNCC

Mrs Tracey Quince
JNCC

Mr Paul Rose
JNCC

Mrs Sally Thomas
Scottish Natural Heritage

Dr Steve Wilkinson
JNCC

Mr Marcus Yeo
JNCC

Apologies

Members

Professor Mel Austen
Independent member

Dr Mike Cantlay
Scottish Natural Heritage

Professor Howard Platt
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Attendees

Helen Anderson
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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 meeting. Professor Platt was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health. The Committee sent their best wishes for his recovery.
- 2.2 Professor Gilligan welcomed three new members to the meeting: Professor Steve Ormerod (Natural Resources Wales), Lord Blencathra (Natural England Deputy Chair) and Professor Michael Winter (Natural England). All gave a brief résumé of their background and experience.
- 2.3 Members were informed that Dr David Stroud had been awarded the British Trust for Ornithology Marsh Award for International Ornithology. The award is presented to an individual scientist whose work on the international stage has had significant influence on British ornithology. In addition, Professor Maggs had jointly received the Provasoli Award, for the best paper published in the Journal of Phycology in 2017.
- 2.4 SharePoint was now the main hub for information for Committee members. Any queries should be addressed to Mrs Elliott.

3. Declaration of interests

- 3.1 No new declarations were made. Members were informed that the register of interests would be circulated shortly so members could check their declarations were up to date.

Action point(s)
AP01. Mrs Elliott to circulate the register of interests to members for updates.

4. Confidential minutes of the September 2018 meeting (JNCC 18 44)

4.1 The minutes of the September meeting were confirmed.

5 Matters arising (JNCC 18 45)

5.1 There were no matters arising.

5.2 The Committee noted the report of outstanding actions in Annex 1.

5.3 Mr Banner referred members to the September meeting discussion on the proposed new environment body and Mr Gove's comments during his evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee regarding its possible location in Aberdeen. Mr Banner asked if the Committee should actively seek out possibilities of co-location and co-working with this new body. Mr Yeo informed members that the current working assumption was that the body would not cover devolved responsibilities, so location in Aberdeen was unlikely. Members agreed to keep a watching brief on developments. The Defra consultation document on Environmental Principles and Governance would be shared with members on SharePoint.

Action point(s)
AP02. Mrs Elliott to add the Defra consultation document on Environmental Principles and Governance on SharePoint.

6 Chief Executive's report on topical issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 46)

6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

7 Report from Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Sub-Group (Official) (Oral report)

7.1 Dr Goold reported on behalf of Professor Austen, Chair of the MPA Sub-Group, who was unable to attend the meeting because of an overseas commitment. Dr

Goold informed members that the Group had met by telecom on 12th October and had discussed four items:

- i. progress on identifying options for deep sea marine reserves in Scotland's seas;
- ii. the Scottish marine SPA suite;
- iii. post-consultation advice on a third tranche of Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) proposals for Defra; and
- iv. reflections on the membership of the Sub-Group.

7.2 The deep sea marine reserves work was progressing well. The Sub-Group is scheduled to look at advice for ministers in February 2019.

7.3 The marine SPA work has resulted in a substantive post-consultation report and a change to JNCC and SNH advice, which will be presented to the Chair for approval imminently.

7.4 The Sub-Group was content with the MCZ post-consultation advice, which was sent to Defra on 2nd November. JNCC will now be supporting Defra with the work leading up to formal designation orders, which must be in place within one year of the public consultation.

7.5 The Sub-Group is in a transitional phase over membership, with Natural England and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Board members having reached the end of their terms. Dr Horwood (formerly Natural England) had been co-opted for a short period of time as a valued expert and point of continuity. In addition, there was a gap in Northern Ireland membership due to Professor Platt's ongoing illness. The Sub-Group is in risk of being inquorate with only three active members and there is still a substantive work programme ahead. Strong national representation over the years has enabled the Sub-Group to be sensitive about how advice is presented and handled for different administrations.

7.6 Professor Ormerod agreed to discuss Welsh membership on the Sub-Group, with the Chair of NRW. Natural England membership remains unresolved. Dr Horwood has indicated his willingness to remain on the group as a co-opted member for the substantive business ahead.

7.7 The Committee extended their thanks to Dr Havard and Dr Horwood for their participation on the Sub-Group.

8 Report from ARAC (oral)

8.1 In summarising the key issues discussed at the ARAC meeting on 28 November, Professor Galbraith informed the Committee that:

- i. the profile of internal audit had been raised with the Science Management Board;
- ii. sharing best practice and information with ARACs across the Defra Group is being explored;
- iii. the scheduled review of the Equality and Diversity policy would be brought forward to address current issues;
- iv. a cyber security risk has been added to the significant risks register to reflect current concerns;
- v. good progress had been made implementing outstanding audit recommendations and the internal audit plan for 2018/19 was well underway;
- vi. teleconferences would be held in mid-January to discuss risks associated with EU exit and to identify risks for the 2019/20 risk register;
- vii. a paper on staff turnover will be discussed by ARAC in March;
- viii. a key change in the external audit strategy for 2018/19 was the focus on EU risks and their impact on financial statements;
- ix. ARAC welcomed the opportunity to help shape the format and content of the annual risk paper and the ARAC report to the Joint Committee;
- x. all compliance areas are in good shape, with quarterly compliance data for evidence quality assurance now available.

8.2 Committee was informed that the Head of Internal Audit (HIA) is leaving JNCC. A new HIA will be appointed shortly. The team completing this year's internal audit programme will remain in place to provide continuity.

8.3 The Committee thanked Professor Galbraith for an excellent report, noting the clarity of content. Professor Gilligan emphasised the need for ARAC to give a sense of the health of the organisation and for the Committee to use ARAC as constructively as possible.

9 Report from Chief Scientists Group (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 47)

9.1 This item was taken in confidence.

10 External factors affecting JNCC (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 48)

10.1 This item was taken in confidence.

11 Update on JNCC's EU exit activities (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 49)

11.1 This item was taken in confidence.

12 Quarter 2 performance report 2018/19 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 50)

12.1 This item was taken in confidence.

13 Business plan for 2019/20 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 51)

13.1 This item was taken in confidence.

14 International opportunities: for JNCC after EU exit (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 52)

14.1 This item was taken in confidence.

15 Habitats Directive Article 17 Report 2013-18: update for the Joint Committee (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 18 53)

15.1 This item was taken in confidence.

16 Joint Committee forward programme (Official) (JNCC 18 54)

16.1 Professor Gilligan introduced the item and informed members that the next meeting would be in Bangor, north Wales on Thursday 14 March. There will be an engagement event the afternoon before, details to follow.

16.2 The Committee agreed to add a paper on the draft JNCC strategy post-2020 to the forward programme.

AP09 Mrs Quince to add 'Draft post-2020 strategy' to the forward programme.

17 Any other business

17.1 Dr Goold informed members that the Scotland Office had contacted him regarding cross-border working. They had asked for examples of case studies to communicate positive cross-border working between government bodies. The Committee agreed that Dr Goold should work with SNH to pull ideas together for case studies to be presented to the Scotland Office.