



## Minutes of the one hundred and thirty-ninth meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Confirmed

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Time:** 9:45

**Venue:** Quay House, Fletton Quays, Peterborough

### Present

#### Members

**Melanie Austen**  
Natural England

**Cath Denholm**  
Independent Interim Chair

**Colin Galbraith**  
Nature Scot

**Rebecca Grattage**  
Board Apprentice

**Pete Higgins**  
NatureScot

**Thomas Meagher**  
Independent member

**Julian Orford**  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

**Steve Ormerod**  
Natural Resources Wales

#### Attendees

**Natalie Askew**  
JNCC

**Nichola Burnett**  
JNCC Attendee

**David Collins**  
JNCC

**Tracey Elliott**  
JNCC

**John Goold**  
JNCC

**Samuel Hardman**  
JNCC Attendee

**Gemma Harper**  
JNCC

**Lynn Heeley**  
JNCC

**Tim Hill**  
Natural England Attendee

**Tracey Quince**  
JNCC

**Nigel Reader**  
Committee Attendee and Interim ARAC Chair

**Beth Stoker**  
JNCC

Dave Stone  
JNCC

Eileen Stuart  
Nature Scot Attendee

Chris Tuckett  
JNCC

Steve Wilkinson  
JNCC

## Apologies

### Members

Lord David Blencathra  
Natural England

Rhys Jones  
Natural Resources Wales

### Attendees

Larissa Strutt  
DEARA

Sarah Wood  
Natural Resources Wales

## 1. Closed session

- 1.1. There are no minutes for this item.

## 2. Chairman's opening remarks

- 2.1. Cath welcomed all to the 139<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Committee.

## 3. Declaration of interests

- 3.1. No new declarations were declared.

## 4. Confidential minutes of the March 2024 Meeting (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 24 22D)

- 4.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## 5. Matters arising (Official) (JNCC 24 23I)

- 5.1. Cath introduced the paper and invited comments.
- 5.2. It was noted that the Welsh element of action 5.7 (viii) had been completed.
- 5.3. Action AP07 of the March meeting 'JNCC to develop a reserves policy as soon as possible for Committee approval' was delayed as ARAC had asked at their meeting on 18 June for more time to consider the reserves policy. The policy had been included in paper JNCC 24 27, for the meeting today, but would not now be

discussed. Following further ARAC discussion, the policy will be presented to the Joint Committee for approval.

5.4. Other items discussed under this item included:

- i. **Company Board approval of the Annual Report & Accounts –** Committee commended the work and the successes over the past 12 months, delivering on the ambitions in the JNCC strategy.
- ii. **Committee appointments for three new members and a new JNCC Chair –** these were paused due to the General Election. It was hoped that these could restart quickly once a new Government is in place. Interim arrangements for the chair had been made with Cath's term extended until 30 December. Nigel Reader's term as interim ARAC Chair had also been extended to 30 December. Cath informed members that she would be taking up a new role in the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) on 1 July, this would mean reducing her JNCC Chair time commitment to 1.5 days per week from 2.5. Any conflicts of interest with her new role and JNCC's work would be managed accordingly.
- iii. **Appointment of an interim JNCC Deputy Chair –** with a reduced time commitment for the JNCC chair, Cath had recently reached out to colleagues regarding the appointment of an interim deputy chair. Following informal discussions with candidates, Cath informed members that she had asked Mel Austen to take on the role of interim deputy chair with immediate effect. Members endorsed this proposal and congratulated Mel on her appointment and asked that sufficient time be allocated to fulfil the role and provide the support needed.
- iv. **Committee strategy day –** Cath reflected on the strategy day and the useful conversations on risk, board effectiveness review, implementation of the strategy and the overall strategic context and the communications strategy. Items discussed for further consideration at the September meeting included: -
  - iv.i Significant risk register and risk appetite.
  - iv.ii Committee effectiveness report (report to be circulated in next two weeks). It was agreed that Mel, Cath, Nigel, Gemma and Tracey Quince should meet in early July to look at the structure, format timings and paper formats for non-exec meetings. This meeting should also consider sub-groups, staff engagement with Committee,

future strategy days and how the Company Board might be better utilised.

iv.iii Update on implementation of the strategic roadmaps.

- 5.5 On Committee effectiveness, it was agreed that Cath and Gemma should discuss the report and agree if a separate Committee session was needed ahead of the September main meeting.

Action point(s)
AP01. Governance Team to arrange a meeting between Cath Denholm, Mel Austen, Nigel Reader, Gemma Harper and Tracey Quince to discuss JNCC non-exec meetings and related issues of governance.
AP02. Cath Denholm and Gemma Harper to discuss the need for a separate Joint Committee session on the results of the effectiveness review.

## **6. CEO report on topical issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 24 24I)**

6.1. This item was taken in confidence.

## **7. Review of UK Biodiversity Indicators and their contribution to the CBD Global Biodiversity Framework (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 24 25D)**

7.1. This item was taken in confidence.

## **8. Reports from the three thematic Joint Committee sub-groups (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 24 26P)**

8.1. This item was taken in confidence.

## **9. ARAC and People Committee updates (Official-Sensitive) (Presentation)**

9.1. This item was taken in confidence.

## **10. Strategic Updates from around the UK (Official-sensitive) (Oral)**

10.1. This item was taken in confidence.

## **11. Report from the Chief Scientists Group (Official-sensitive) (Oral)**

11.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **12. JNCC Business Plan 2024 to 2025 and JNCC Reserves Policy (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 24 27D)**

12.1. This item was taken in confidence.

## **13. ARAC annual report 2023/24 (Official) (JNCC 24 28P)**

13.1. Nigel Reader introduced the report.

13.2. The paper contained the ARAC annual report for the year ending 31 March 2024. The report was considered by ARAC members intersessionally in May and approved at its meeting on 18 June. ARAC had provided its own assurance statement to the Joint Committee at the beginning of the report in section 1. The statement provides members with independent assurance that the organisation has in place, adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, internal and external audit functions and financial reporting arrangements that can be relied upon and which contribute to the high corporate governance standards that the Joint Committee expects. This statement of assurance is also included in the Governance Statement contained in the Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/24.

13.3. Committee thanked Nigel for an informative and comprehensive report.

## **14. Joint Committee forward programme (Official) (JNCC 24 29I)**

14.1. Cath Denholm introduced the paper.

14.2. Cath proposed that the September meeting should be held in London on 12<sup>th</sup> September, with ARAC and People Committee meeting in-person in London on the 11<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon. The morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> would be used for a breakfast meeting with the new Defra Minister and the NGO/SNCB/JNCC workshop on 30x30.

14.3. The December meeting of the Joint Committee was discussed. Cath proposed that the meeting take place on one day rather than two. Committee **agreed** to this proposal. Cath asked that members email the Governance Team to advise whether the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of December would be most suitable.

**Action point(s)**

AP10 Committee members to email Governance Team to advise whether the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of December would be most suitable.