



The one hundred and twenty-second meeting of the  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held  
at 08.45 on 12 March 2020 at Hotel Felix, Whitehouse Lane, Huntingdon  
Road, Girton, Cambridge, CB3 0LX

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**

### **Matters arising**

#### **Paper by Tracey Quince**

1. There are no matters arising for this meeting. A report on outstanding action points from previous meetings is attached at Annex 1. All other action points have been discharged.
2. Annex 2 contains an action plan addressing issues arising from the science audit undertaken in February 2019.

## Annex 1. Action points from Joint Committee meetings

### June 2019

|   |                 |  |
|---|-----------------|--|
| <p><b>5.2 Matters arising (JNCC 19 17) (Official) AP01</b><br/>Professor Maggs to develop a strategic programme to address common themes emerging from the science audit, in consultation with Committee members.</p> | Professor Maggs | An action plan has been prepared (see Annex 2). This action is now complete. |
| <p><b>9. Annual report from ARAC (Official) (JNCC 19 19) AP05</b> Mrs Quince to add a contents list to the ARAC annual report for 2019/20.</p>  | Mrs Quince      | To be progressed April 2020.   |
| <p><b>10.3 Report from Chief Scientists Group (Official-Sensitive) JNCC 19 20</b><br/>AP07 Professor Maggs to provide a decision paper on NBN for the September meeting.</p>  | Professor Maggs | Completed. See paper JNCC 20 05.   |

### September 2019

| Action  | Person responsible  | Progress update  |
|---|---------------------|--|
| <p><b>8.3 Report from Marine Protected Areas (MPA) sub-group (Oral report) AP03</b> Dr Goold to draw up a note of the MPA Sub-Group's future work and circulate to Joint Committee members.</p>             | Dr Goold            | Completed.   |
| <p><b>12.6 Performance report for Q1 2019/20 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 38)</b><br/>AP09 Mr Brooks and Mr Banner to discuss engagement with key stakeholders to identify refinements to the website.</p> | Mr Brooks/Mr Banner | Completed. It was agreed that engagement with stakeholders would take place after the old website was closed and the content transferred. This is likely to be in Q3 of 2020/21. |

## November 2019

| Action  | Person responsible  | Progress update  |
|---|---------------------|--|
| <p><b>6.1 Chief Executive's report on topical issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 46)</b><br/>AP01 Communications Team to consider inviting media environment correspondents into JNCC to raise JNCC's profile in the media.</p> | Communications Team | The Communications Team has considered the proposal. Given current resourcing and the lack of a dedicated press team, this is not something JNCC can support at the present time. The Communications team engage with environment correspondents as required but to be more proactive would require a dedicated resource within the team and would generate additional work for the science teams. |
| <p><b>8.1 Reports from Committee sub-groups: MPA; International Reporting; Wider Markets (Official)</b><br/>AP02 Dr Goold to prepare a briefing note on the consultation response on deep sea reserves in Scotland.</p>           | Dr Goold            | In progress. To be actioned following the post-consultation advice considerations by the MPA Sub-Group.  |
| <p><b>10.4 External factors affecting JNCC (Official) (JNCC 19 48)</b><br/>AP03 Mr Evans to circulate to the Committee, the interim second State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR).</p>  | Mr Evans            | Completed  |
| <p><b>11.3 Performance report for Q2 2019/20 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 49)</b><br/>AP04 Mr Brooks to share JNCC stress management practices with SNH.</p>   | Mr Brooks           | Completed  |
| <p><b>13.3 JNCC strategy in relation to climate change (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 19 51)</b><br/>AP05 Dr Wilkinson to convene a meeting with the country nature conservation</p>  | Dr Wilkinson        | Completed. A report was presented at the meeting on 24 February of the Inter-agency Group on Climate Change. The Chairs and Chief Executives of JNCC and the country nature conservation bodies also   |

|   |            |   |
|---|------------|---|
| bodies to co-ordinate an approach for COP26.  |            | discussed climate change and COP26 at a meeting on 29-30 January. |
| <b>16.1 Joint Committee forward programme (Official) (JNCC 19 54)</b><br>AP06 Ms Elliott to circulate meeting dates to members and attendees. | Ms Elliott | Completed   |

## Annex 2. Action plan addressing issues arising from the science audit

| Project/work element  | Outstanding issues identified in science audit, February 2019                                      | Recent review and outcome  | Actions recommended   | Progress to date and completion date  |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <b>1. Consideration of issues concerning data science, analyses and modelling</b> |  |  |   |   |
| <b>Digital and Data Solutions Team</b>  |  |  |   |   |
| Methods and tools for data science  | Updating of methods and approaches – they were not always regarded as state of the art.            | The team would welcome an external review of security, some cloud-based products, IT processes, and to identify gaps. This would help us to improve our processes. | Seek opportunities to modernise approaches.<br><br>Identify suitable consultancy(ies) and commission best practice review(s).   | Team has worked with Science and Technology Facilities Council to use the JASMIN super-data-cluster facility.<br><br>Some processes in the DDS team and science teams have been reviewed by Steamhaus consultancy. To be completed by end FY 20/21. |
| Support to JNCC science teams   | Lack of planning and integration between needs of science team and DDS work programme.             | Considered during business planning, which indicates that developers in DDS are not over-programmed.   | Interface between DDS and other teams needs improvement. Options to address this problem need to be considered at the organisational level. Improve planning integration between science teams and DDS. | Digital pipeline project is now recording teams' needs for new models, websites etc.<br><br>Business planning for FY 20/21 is providing an interface; to be reviewed at beginning of next FY.   |
| <b>Ecosystem Analysis Team</b>  |  |  |   |   |
| Ecosystems and biodiversity analyses  | Methods, approaches and outputs were all excellent and appropriate, showing continual improvement. | Extensive external review of Terrestrial Surveillance programme in 2019 by agency staff and independent experts was very positive; a report was                    | None  | None  |

| Project/work element                         | Outstanding issues identified in science audit, February 2019  | Recent review and outcome  | Actions recommended  | Progress to date and completion date   |
|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  | presented to the Joint Committee.                                  |  |  |
| <b>Marine Monitoring and Evidence Team</b>   |  |  |  |  |
| Seabed mapping and marine monitoring         | Lack of access to suitable computing and big data so team were unable to work at required resolution.  | Marian Scott (Joint Committee) reviewed the team's work and needs. | Explore options to use JASMIN and determine whether constraints are software or computing.                                   | First phase of exploration with DDS and Steamhaus consultancy on Amazon orchestration is complete.<br><br>Additional trials will be carried out in 20/21.  |
| <b>2. Quality assurance of expert advice</b> |  |  |  |  |
| <b>International Team</b>                    |  |  |  |  |
| International advice                         | Competence in how to critically review, assess or evaluate the work of others, typically commissioned research or reviews, is usually developed on the job. Some formal training in how to undertake such critical evaluations would be helpful. | No recent reviews  | Further assessment of competence and procedures with introduction of formal knowledge synthesis methods was deemed valuable. | Internal review was carried out by Christine Maggs in December 2019, by interviews with the team leader and follow-up supply of documents. There was clear evidence of currency and integration. A recent example is the non-detriment decision on eels, which was based on data analyses and modelling by AFBI.<br><br>Formal induction to knowledge synthesis methods using Eklipse methodology to support expert judgement to be offered to team in FY 20/21. |

| Project/work element                                       | Outstanding issues identified in science audit, February 2019  | Recent review and outcome   | Actions recommended   | Progress to date and completion date  |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| <b>3. Operational activities</b>                           |  |   |   |   |
| <b>International Team</b>                                  |  |   |   |   |
| CITES  | How decisions are made at the operational level is not entirely clear as it often does not depend directly on analyses of data.                                  | Recent review of EQA procedures reported that they have been successfully revised and tested.   | Carry out an internal review of processes involved in CITES advice and decisions.   | This was carried out by Christine Maggs in December 2019, by detailed interviews with the CITES team and inspection of papers and reports. This confirmed that high-quality peer review of CITES decisions is part of the CITES process in Europe, recently reported in a peer-reviewed publication, <i>Biological Conservation</i> . |
| <b>General issues identified across JNCC science teams</b> |  |   |   |   |
| Staff development  | Lack of time for staff development. The CPD programme is not working very well at the moment, with a lack of clarity as to how it should function and be funded. | CPD in Civil Service people surveys e.g. "I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities" scores for 2019 and 2020 were fairly low and not improving. | Review CPD provision. Policies have already been fully revised.   | 1New CPD funding and approvals system has been implemented.<br><br>New CPD leadership group to appoint team CPD champions and report by June 2020 to better understand JNCC staff concerns and preferences.   |
| Difficulty in asserting JNCC as co-authors of publications | Several teams noted the problem of a lack of visibility of outputs due to working with partners.   | Internal assessment.  | To increase visibility of outputs where possible, encourage partners to include JNCC as authors where possible; encourage JNCC staff to contribute to writing papers with | To date, partner organisations (e.g. BTO and CEH) have been reminded of their obligations.  |



| Project/work element | Outstanding issues identified in science audit, February 2019 | Recent review and outcome | Actions recommended  | Progress to date and completion date |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
|                      |   |                           | <p>partners - insist that JNCC are not just funders.</p> <p>For reporting such as OSPAR, we would have to influence the decision not to recognise authors.</p> |                                      |