



The one hundred and thirtieth meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held at 11.00 on 9 March 2022 and 09.30 on 10 March 2022 virtually via Microsoft Teams

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*“To be a world-leading provider of innovative solutions, placing nature at the heart of sustainable wealth and well-being.”*

## Minutes of the 129th meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Unconfirmed

**Date:** 1 December 2021

**Time:** 11:00

**Venue:** virtually via Microsoft Teams

### Present

#### Members

**Professor Mel Austen**  
Independent member

**Lord Blencathra**  
Natural England

**Ms Cath Denholm (items 6-10)**  
NatureScot

**Professor Colin Galbraith**  
Independent Chair

**Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick**  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

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

**Professor Steve Ormerod**  
Natural Resources Wales

**Professor Marian Scott**  
Independent member

**Professor Michael Winter**  
Natural England

#### Attendees

**Mr David Collins**  
JNCC

**Dr Gemma Harper**  
JNCC

**Ms Manaswita Konar**  
JNCC

**Professor Christine Maggs**  
JNCC

**Dr Sara McGuckin**  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**Mrs Tracey Quince**  
JNCC

**Dr Des Thompson**  
NatureScot

**Dr Ruth Waters**  
Natural England

**Dr Steve Wilkinson**  
JNCC

**Ms Helen Wilkinson**  
Natural Resources Wales

## Apologies

### Members

Mr Charles Banner  
Independent member

Professor Ian Bateman  
Independent member

Sir David Henshaw  
Natural Resources Wales

Ms Aoife Martin  
NatureScot

### Attendees

Ms Helen Anderson  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr Colin Armstrong  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Professor Chris Collins  
Natural Resources Wales

Ms Ceri Davies  
Natural Resources Wales

Dr John Goold  
JNCC

Dr Tim Hill  
Natural England

Ms Eileen Stuart  
NatureScot

## 1. Closed session

- 1.1. There are no minutes for this item.

## 2. Chairman's opening remarks

- 2.1. Professor Galbraith welcomed members and attendees to the 129<sup>th</sup> meeting, which was taking place over two days as a virtual meeting in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members approved recording the meeting for minuting purposes. Professor Galbraith updated members on a number of key issues, noting that work on the QQR7 is progressing, with useful dialogue with a range of stakeholders. He highlighted the publication of the Nature Positive 2030 Report as a significant achievement for JNCC and for the Country Agencies. He reported on the JNCC input to CoP26 and congratulated the staff involved for their work on this. He noted that the Spending Review was underway and that discussions are ongoing on Fletton Quays.
- 2.2. Professor Orford, Deputy Chair of CNCC was welcomed to his first meeting. He provided members with a brief resume of his career and experience to date, which included Emeritus Professor of physical geography at Queens University, Belfast and Chair of Northern Ireland Environment Link. Professor Orford was previously a member of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside before being appointed Deputy Chair on 1 November 2021.
- 2.3. Dr Waters, Dr Thompson and Ms Wilkinson were welcomed as attendees. They were standing in for Dr Hill, Ms Stuart, and Professor Collins respectively.

- 2.4. Professor Galbraith advised members that the interviews for two new independent members of the Committee had now taken place. The internal government process to appoint new members was now underway, with ministerial approval required by Defra and the Devolved Administrations. It was hoped that an announcement on the appointments would be made early in the new year.
- 2.5. Professor Galbraith was pleased to report that Dr Harper had returned to work following medical leave. She was unable to join the meeting today but would join for the engagement event this afternoon and the Joint Committee meeting on 2 December.

### 3. Declaration of interests

- 3.1. No new declarations were reported. Professor Galbraith emphasised the importance of keeping declarations up to date.
- 3.2. Members were reminded to advise Mrs Morgan of any new declarations.

### 4. Matters arising (Official) (JNCC 21 45P)

- 4.1. There were no matters arising for this meeting.
- 4.2. The Joint Committee **noted** the report of outstanding actions in Annex 1.

### 5. Chief Executive's Report on Topical Issues (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 46P)

- 5.1. This item was taken in confidence.

**6. Update on UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (CoP26) (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 47P)**

6.1. This item was taken in confidence.

**7 Update on Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties (CoP15) (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 48P)**

7.1. This item was taken in confidence.

**8 Enhancing JNCC Governance to Improve Engagement with Governments (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 49P)**

8.1 This item was taken in confidence.

**9 Corporate Planning 2022/23 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 50P)**

9.1 This item was taken in confidence.

**10 Developing Sustainable Finance Solutions for Nature-based Solutions (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 51P)**

10.1 This item was taken in confidence.

**11 Updates from around the UK (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 52P)**

11.1 This item was taken in confidence.



## Minutes of the 129th meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Unconfirmed

**Date:** 2 December 2021

**Time:** 09:30

**Venue:** virtually via Microsoft Teams

### Present

#### Members

Professor Mel Austen  
Independent member

Mr Charles Banner  
Independent member

Lord Blencathra  
Natural England

Ms Cath Denholm  
NatureScot

Professor Colin Galbraith  
Independent Chair

Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Professor Julian Orford  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Professor Steve Ormerod  
Natural Resources Wales

Professor Marian Scott  
Independent member

Professor Michael Winter (items 5-15)  
Natural England

#### Attendees

Mr David Collins  
JNCC

Dr Gemma Harper  
JNCC

Ms Manaswita Konar  
JNCC

Professor Christine Maggs  
JNCC

Dr Sara McGuckin  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mrs Tracey Quince  
JNCC

Ms Eileen Stuart  
NatureScot

Dr Ruth Waters  
Natural England

Dr Steve Wilkinson  
JNCC

Ms Helen Wilkinson  
Natural Resources Wales

### Apologies

#### Members

Professor Ian Bateman  
Independent member

#### Attendees

Ms Helen Anderson  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Sir David Henshaw  
Natural Resources Wales

Mr Colin Armstrong  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Ms Aoife Martin  
NatureScot

Professor Chris Collins  
Natural Resources Wales

Ms Ceri Davies  
Natural Resources Wales

Dr John Goold  
JNCC

Dr Tim Hill  
Natural England

## 1. Chairman's opening remarks

- 1.1 Professor Galbraith welcomed members and attendees to day two of the 129<sup>th</sup> meeting, which was taking place as a virtual meeting in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members approved recording the meeting for minuting purposes.
- 1.2 Professor Galbraith informed members that this would be Professor Bateman's final meeting. He would write to thank him for his work on the Committee over the past seven years. Professor Bateman leaves the Committee on 31 January 2022.
- 1.3 Professor Galbraith reminded members that staff, and the public were welcome to join the meeting and emphasised the importance of transparency and accountability. A Joint Committee observer programme for staff is being developed and will be implemented in March 2022.
- 1.4 Following the Committee's consideration of the CEO report the previous day, Professor Galbraith asked Dr Harper to highlight any issues she wished to bring to members attention. Dr Harper highlighted issues around work life balance and the culture of taking on too much. Committee agreed to support the Executive to prioritise delivery. Dr Harper informed members that there were plans to extend the remit of the Remuneration Committee to take on some of the people issues considered currently by ARAC. Membership of the Remuneration Committee would also be considered in light of the changes and with two new Committee members due to join in the new year.

## 2 Declaration of interests

- 2.1 No new declarations were reported. Professor Galbraith emphasised the importance of keeping declarations up to date.
- 2.2 Members were reminded to advise Mrs Morgan of any new declarations.

### 3 Review of Joint Committee Workshop

- 3.1. Professor Galbraith introduced this item.
- 3.2. Professor Galbraith thanked staff for the organisation of the workshop the previous day, which he reflected was well timed with a good blend of contributions and interactions across all countries. The challenge now was to keep the momentum and condense the outputs into a work programme and effective strategy to take monitoring forward and then structure it into a follow-on event in March 2022.
- 3.3. Committee noted that maintaining CNCB involvement was a key aspect in this important area of JNCC's work. Analysing the monitoring programmes to come up with the big messages would provide a basis for the conversation.
- 3.4. Committee agreed that the follow-up workshop planned for March 2022 should focus on next steps.

### 4 Confidential minutes of the September 2021 meeting (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 53D)

- 4.1 Committee **approved** the minutes of the September 2021 meeting as a true record of the meeting.

### 5 Report from ARAC on 29<sup>th</sup> November (Official) (Oral)

- 5.1 In summarising the key issues discussed at the ARAC meeting on 29 November, Mr Banner made the following points:
  - i. ARAC had discussed the final reports for the Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA), Scientific Capability and Financial Management and Control audit reports. The NCEA audit had received a moderate opinion with 1 medium and 4 low priority recommendations. The Scientific Capability audit received a moderate opinion with 4 medium and 1 low priority recommendations, and the Financial Management and Control audit received a substantial opinion with 1 low priority recommendation. ARAC agreed that a proportionate approach to agreeing recommendations arising from audit work was important to ensure audits were adding value and that recommendations could be resourced alongside other tasks.
  - ii. The Significant Risks Register had been updated by ELT at Q2. Linkages had been made with the corporate risk register. ARAC welcomed this change. Both registers would inform the size and content of the 2022/23 internal audit programme. At ARAC's request, the status of 'in progress' or



'planned' mitigations were now marked as 'on track' or 'delayed'. ARAC emphasised the importance of proportionality and prioritisation in implementing risk mitigation measures, with some measures delayed this year due to lack of resources.

- iii. Ms Denholm provided an update on the EDI risk drill down she was currently working on. Meetings had taken place with the EDI group and Chairs of the Neurodiversity Group. A meeting with ELT was being organised. Relevant documentation was being reviewed including: EDI policy, results of EDI survey, EDI group action plan and biannual wellbeing survey. The final report would be presented to ARAC at the February intersessional meeting.
- iv. ARAC had previously raised concerns around bullying and harassment statistics following the 2019 People Survey. Work on the Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation policy had been delayed due to resourcing issues within the HR team. Resource was now being moved to complete this work. HR were working closely with the EDI group to develop a scheme for Anti-Bullying Champions. A comprehensive report would be provided at the March 2022 ARAC meeting. ARAC were content with the suggested approach.
- v. ARAC had reviewed their terms of reference, and these now required approval by the Joint Committee. Discussion was underway on the remit of the Remuneration Committee who could provide oversight on some of the people issues currently covered by ARAC. ARAC had agreed to review their terms of reference again once the changes to the Remuneration Committee had been agreed.
- vi. The Defra counter-fraud team had undertaken an analysis of group risk and had requested an updated Fraud Risk Assessment from JNCC. This area had previously been covered as an item in the Corporate Risk Register, however a more in-depth assessment of JNCC's potential fraud risks had now been undertaken. ARAC welcomed an annual review of the assessment.
- vii. ARAC had noted the usual compliance report, notably that the phased re-opening of Inverdee House in Aberdeen begins with phase 1 for those who have a critical need to return to the office; overseas travel had commenced in accordance with Government guidelines. All overseas travel required director approval; and there had been no reported breaches of the environmental policy, equality and diversity or cyber security policies or any instances of fraud or presumptive fraud.

- 5.2 Committee thanked Mr Banner for an informative presentation and **noted** the update. Committee supported the options for future internal audit provision, noting the need to resolve the issue of poor performance as the staff time cost for JNCC was considerable. The review of the Remuneration Committee terms of reference was welcomed. Committee noted the need to consider links between ARAC and the Remuneration Committee.

## **6 Report from Committee sub-groups (Official-sensitive) (Oral)**

6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **7 JNCC Science and Evidence Strategy (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 54D)**

7.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **8 Report from the Chief Scientists Group (CSG) (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 55P)**

8.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **9 The Future of Volunteer Surveys at JNCC (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 56D)**

9.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **10 Proposals for Engaging JNCC Staff and Joint Committee Members (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 57D)**

10.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **11 Update on Fletton Quays (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 58D)**

11.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **12 Performance Report for Q2 2021/2022 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 21 59I)**

12.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **13 ARAC Terms of Reference (Official) (JNCC 21 60D)**

13.1 Mr Banner presented this item, explaining that the Joint Committee are required to approve the revised terms of reference for ARAC. ARAC are required to review their terms of reference every two years, and this was agreed as part of a governance audit in 2020.

13.2 Mr Banner explained that the terms of reference had largely been updated to reflect changes to the forward programme, but also to bring them up to date in

relation to how ARAC meet, now virtually for three meetings a year and to mirror the standing orders for the Joint Committee in relation to environmental and cost issues when they meet in-person.

- 13.3 At the ARAC meeting on 29 November, members had agreed three additional changes: -
- i. Paragraph 6.1 – intersessional meetings should say up to ‘four’ in case four were not required.
  - ii. Paragraph 9.1 should be prefaced with a sentence to say the ‘list of documents with at least the following’.
  - iii. Paragraph 9.2 should include an additional point to cover the ARAC Chair bringing back issues from Defra ARC Chairs meetings.
- 13.4 As the meeting was no longer quorate, those members who had left the meeting would be required to email their approval of the revised terms of reference via email.
- 13.5 Committee members at the meeting **approved** the proposed changes to the ARAC Terms of Reference, subject to the amendments above, and subject to absent members approving them via email.

## 14 Joint Committee Forward Programme (Official) (JNCC 21 61D)

- 14.1 Committee **confirmed** they were content with the proposed forward programme. Members welcomed the inclusion of intersessional meetings / workshops / briefing sessions to the programme.
- 14.2 Dr Harper informed members that she was working to align the executive management boards business with Joint Committee agendas to ensure there was a consistent flow of information and decision making. Once revised, the JNCC strategy ‘JNCC 2030’ discussed earlier in the meeting would help to set the Committee forward programme.
- 14.3 Dr Harper advised that in Q4, an advisory audit would take place in the Communications area. Dr Harper proposed that the June Committee schedule a deep dive into the Communications area following outcomes from the advisory piece. Also, the June Committee meeting could consider agenda items for the Chairs/CEO meeting planned to take place in July.
- 14.4 Professor Galbraith proposed that the first in-person meeting in March 2022 should take place in Edinburgh. The plan at present was to hold the March meeting in-person, subject to Covid restrictions.

## 15 Any Other Business (Official) (Oral)

15.1 Dr Harper offered to prepare a one-page key messages report for CNCB Board members. Committee agreed this was an excellent idea and would help to retain JNCC's work and profile amongst CNCB Board members. The report could be presented to CNCB Boards as a regular agenda item if a slot was available.

15.2 Professor Galbraith asked for volunteers to do the next JNCC vlog. Professor Scott volunteered.

Action point(s)
AP18 Mrs Quince to prepare a short key messages report for CNCB Board members and circulate to CNCB Joint Committee members by mid-January.