



The one hundred and thirty-first meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held at 11.00 on 8 June 2022 and 09.30 on 9 June 2022 at the Holiday Inn, 132 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 6UA

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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“Turning science into action for nature, people and the planet.”

Minutes of the 130th meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Unconfirmed

Date: 9 March 2022

Time: 11:00

Venue: virtually via Microsoft Teams

Present

Members

Professor Mel Austen
Independent member

Mr Charles Banner QC
Independent member

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
Natural England

Attendees

Mr David Collins
JNCC

Dr John Goold
JNCC

Dr Gemma Harper
JNCC

Dr Tim Hill
Natural England

Ms Manaswita Konar
JNCC

Professor Christine Maggs
JNCC

Dr Sara McGuckin
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mrs Tracey Quince
JNCC

Ms Eileen Stuart
NatureScot

Dr Steve Wilkinson
JNCC

Ms Helen Wilkinson
Natural Resources Wales

Vin Fleming (item 7)
JNCC

Dr Clare Whitfield (item 7)

JNCC

Ms Willow Outhwaite (item 7)
JNCC

Apologies

Members

Lord Blencathra
Natural England

Ms Aoife Martin
NatureScot

Sir David Henshaw
Natural Resources Wales

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

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 130th 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.
- 2.2. The Committee observed a minute's silence for the recent death of a staff member, Stuart Wallace. Committee also held a silence for those who had lost their lives in the war in Europe.
- 2.3. A note had been circulated to the Committee on 24 February informing members of Professor Scott's resignation. Professor Galbraith, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Professor Scott for her contribution over the past four years and wished her well for the future. Professor Scott will leave the Committee on 1st June 2022
- 2.4. Professor Galbraith advised members that Professor Chris Collins and Ms Helen Wilkinson were sharing the attendee role on behalf of Natural Resources Wales.
- 2.5. The appointment of three new independent Committee members was nearing completion. It was hoped that an announcement on the appointments was imminent.
- 2.6. Professor Galbraith informed members that this would be Ms Denholm's final meeting as a NatureScot member. On behalf of the Committee, Professor

Galbraith thanked her for her contribution to the Committee and to ARAC and wished her well for the future.

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 Elliott of any new declarations.

4. Matters arising (Official) (JNCC 22 02P)

- 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 22 03P)

- 5.1. This item was taken in confidence.

6. CNCB Chairs / CEO meeting (Official) (Oral)

- 6.1. Dr Harper gave a verbal update on the planned SNCB Chairs / CEO meeting to be held on 6-7 July.
- 6.2. Dr Harper advised that JNCC will host the meeting on 6th to 7th July. A site visit to Woodwalton Fen on the 6th is planned, with a dinner in the evening and then the meeting on the 7th will discuss UK Nature recovery in the context of a new biodiversity framework, the UK's negotiating position for CBD, the consequences for the biodiversity framework and the indicators to be refreshed. Two key outputs from the meeting will firstly be to agree the collective governance around nature recovery and whether the right level of senior governance is in place with the challenge back into government. Secondly, building on the success of Nature Positive 2030, what is the collective ambition around communications and engagement for the UK narrative around nature recovery? The planned SNCB CEO's meeting on 14 April will refine the agenda and papers for the meeting.

7. Update on Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties (CoP15) and the UK Biodiversity Framework (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 04P)

7.1. This item was taken in confidence.

8. Reviewing investment in species surveillance schemes (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 05D)

8.1. This item was taken in confidence.

9. Report from the Chief Scientists Group (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 06P)

9.1. This item was taken in confidence.

10 Updates from around the UK (Official) (JNCC 22 07P)

10.1 This item was taken in confidence.



Minutes of the 130th meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Unconfirmed

Date: 10 March 2022

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

Attendees

Mr David Collins

JNCC

Dr John Goold

JNCC

Dr Gemma Harper

JNCC

Dr Tim Hill

Natural England

Dr Manaswita Konar

JNCC

Professor Christine Maggs

JNCC

Dr Sara McGuckin

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mrs Tracey Quince

JNCC

Ms Eileen Stuart

NatureScot

Dr Steve Wilkinson

JNCC

Ms Helen Wilkinson

Natural Resources Wales

Apologies

Members

Sir David Henshaw
Natural Resources Wales

Michael Winter
Natural England

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

1. Chairman's opening remarks

- 1.1 Professor Galbraith welcomed members and attendees to day two of the 130th meeting, which was taking place as a virtual meeting in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members approved recording the meeting for minuting purposes.

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 Elliott of any new declarations.

3. Review of Joint Committee strategy session

- 3.1. Professor Galbraith introduced this item and thanked staff for the organisation of the workshop the previous day.
- 3.2 Professor Galbraith noted the timeliness of the event with the work to refresh the strategy underway and the opportunity for members to engage on setting the vision and mission for the next few years. The most effective way to take this work forward would be establishing three new sub-groups, each led by a committee member, with a director lead, to do a deep-dive on themes, with an additional sub-group to look at cross-cutting issues, made up of all three sub-group Chairs and Director leads. Linking this work with the Committee's working objectives, ensuring the Committee's objectives were aligned to support implementation of the new strategy was vital. Setting clear terms of reference for each sub-group, devising a standard set of questions for all sub-groups to consider and providing a framework for standardised reporting were important.
- 3.3 Dr Harper welcomed members input to the JNCC story which would be refined and agreed over the next few weeks.

Action point(s)

AP08. Professor Galbraith and Dr Harper to meet before mid-April to agree a Chair and Director Lead for each sub-group, terms of reference for each sub-group, a standard set of questions and a framework for reporting.

AP09 Committee members to provide intersessional comments on the JNCC story by 25 March 2022.

4. Confidential minutes of the December 2021 meeting (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 08D)

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

5. Report from ARAC on 7th March (Official) (Oral)

- 5.1 In summarising the key issues discussed at the ARAC meeting on 7 March, Mr Banner made the following points:
- i. The audit plan for 2021/22 was on track to be completed by 31 March 2022. The communications audit was in train, focussed on compliance with the Government Functional Standard. ARAC had discussed the final audit report on Learning and Development (L&D), which received a moderate opinion with 2 medium priority recommendations raised. ARAC agreed the importance of embedding learning into the organisation, acknowledging the need for staff to be given time and space to develop their skills and knowledge. The cultural transformation planned by the Executive would place learning as a core organisational value, to ensure the organisation thrives, staff engagement remains high and staff well-being and job satisfaction is improved. A potential role for Joint Committee members in mentoring and coaching staff was discussed.
 - ii. ARAC agreed the proposed internal audit plan and strategy for the next three years, which was based on 50 days covering four audits in the areas of payroll processes, procurement and contract awards, data security (GDPR) and charging model and cost recovery. The fee for the proposed plan was £36k. The GIAA contract was agreed for one year only, with years two and three dependent on performance.
 - iii. The interim audit had begun, with some communication issues with the new NAO team highlighted. A new significant risk, relating to fraud and revenue recognition, had been added, to address whether financial statements may be materially misstated through fraudulent revenue recognitions. The audit fee had increased this year by 6.5%. ARAC were content with the additional cost.
 - iv. The Significant Risks Register had been updated by ELT at Q3. At the end of Q3, 12 out of 57 risk mitigations were delayed but in progress. Most of these related to the 'people' risk. ELT had agreed that delayed implementation did not represent a significant risk. Additional mitigation has been added to the cyber security risk in line with the newly developed IT security change programme. A new EDI risk had been added to the

corporate risk register in line with a recommendation in the EDI risk drill-down. ARAC noted the limitations of the pay flexibility mechanism, with a capability-based pay framework considered a better long-term option. This arrangement would enable movement through pay bands based on achievement of higher workforce productivity. ARAC had discussed the risks posed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Caspian Sea project had indirect relationships with Russian scientists. The situation would be monitored. Potential well-being related risks in relation to war in Europe were also discussed.

- v. ARAC discussed the risk appetite and noted that the higher risk appetite for funding and income diversification activities did not correlate to the lower appetite on people risks. The need to balance pressure on staff against income ambition was pressing. The risk appetite for information accessibility, security, and data management at 1-4 looked too high given the increasing emphasis on cyber-security.
- vi. ARAC discussed the management response to the EDI risk drill down, noting JNCC's strong commitment to EDI, with a new G7 to lead and mainstream EDI activity. All recommendations in the report had been agreed. Cultural intelligence training for staff was planned for 2022/23. ARAC suggested the use of specialist expertise on recruitment portals to increase accessibility and streamline recruitment processes.
- vii. The anti-bullying, harassment and victimisation policy had been revised in consultation with the trade unions and JNCC's EDI group. ARAC were content with the revised policy. The recent People Survey indicated a fall of 4% in those claiming to have been bullied and harassed at work. In-house training had been developed to support the roll out of this policy in Q1 2022/23. Training is mandatory for Line Managers.
- viii. ARAC had discussed the annual report on information management and cyber security. ARAC noted the rising prevalence of ransomware and data exfiltration, and that JNCC systems had quarantined 2.5 million emails (12 months to December 2021) of which 5000 contained malware and 4000 were phishing attempts. Remote working had introduced new information security/governance risks from insecure working environments and co-living arrangements. ARAC were informed that a recruitment was underway for a Cyber Security Officer. ARAC acknowledged the recruitment challenges in this area.
- ix. ARAC noted that assurance across all compliance areas was good at the end of Q3. There had been no reported breaches of the environmental or equality and diversity policies. No instances of fraud or presumptive fraud were reported. Monkstone House was operating as a covid-secure office and currently had 35 bookable desks across two floors. The phased re-opening of Inverdee House in Aberdeen was in train. Implementation of an environmental management system would be prioritised in 2022/23.
- x. ARAC noted the final risk drill down for 2021/22 on divergence across the component parts of the UK was currently in progress. ARAC proposed three risk drill downs for 2022/23, fiscal strategy, building a learning organisation and environmental performance. ARAC agreed to consider the need for a risk drill down in the Communications area after the outcomes of the current internal audit were known.
- xi. ARAC had discussed the performance of internal audit over the past 12 months. Both ARAC and the Executive agreed that the internal audit service had been inadequate and had not provided the assurance they needed in a useful way and when they needed it; had not been sufficiently responsive to changes in the risk profile, ensuring it remained relevant and

had not been a facilitator for change, improving business efficiency and effectiveness. A new Head of Internal Audit was now in place and GIAA had been given 12 months to improve their service provision. ARAC agreed to monitor GIAA's performance to inform a decision on provision for 2023/24 and beyond.

5.2 Committee noted:

- i. The need to take a proportionate approach to external funding and to prioritise the sources of funding to prevent the staff stretch experienced this financial year.
- ii. There was software available to assist with recruiting a more diverse workforce. Ms Denholm shared a link to a recruitment platform, <https://www.beapplied.com/>. This had been used by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and had made a marked difference to EHRC's diversity in the recruitment stages. It was also very popular amongst recruiting managers and HR more generally as it sped up the recruitment process. It was agreed that HR would assess its suitability for JNCC.
- iii. Committee noted their strong support for a drill down on environmental performance. It was agreed that outputs from the Defra Group greening Government commitments programme would be shared with members.
- iv. The planned desktop disaster scenario exercise to assess JNCC's response to a cyber-attack was welcomed.
- v. Committee noted the appointment of a new Grade 7, Head of Organisational Development to strengthen overall governance, environmental performance, lead on the move to Fletton Quays and lead on EDI.

5.3 Committee thanked Mr Banner for an informative presentation and **noted** the update.

Action point(s)
AP10 Mrs Corney to consider the Applied Recruitment Platform to assess its suitability for EDI recruitment in JNCC.
AP11 Ms McGregor to circulate outputs from the Defra Group greening Government commitments programme to members.

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

6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

7 Performance Report for Q3 2021/2022 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 09P)

7.1 This item was taken in confidence.

8 JNCC business planning and funding 2022/23 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 10P)

8.1 This item was taken in confidence.

9 Risk management in JNCC (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 22 11D)

9.1 This item was taken in confidence.

10 Joint Committee working objectives for 2022/23 (Official) (JNCC 22 12P)

10.1 Professor Galbraith introduced this item, summarising the conclusions of the engagement event discussion on working objectives the previous day. A report on members input would be presented to the intersessional meeting on 26 April.

10.2 In discussing members contributions to the 2021/22 working objectives, Committee agreed that all objectives had been achieved, but looking ahead to 2022/23, more work was required in the external relations objective to communicate the JNCC story and proactively communicate JNCC's role to a wider audience.

10.3 In discussing the changes required to the current set of working objectives to take them forward into 2022/23, Committee agreed to:

- i. Add a task relating to overseeing the move to Fletton Quays into Objective 1.
- ii. Plan members input to Objective 2 to ensure effective collaboration through the JNCC strategy refresh.
- iii. Add two additional tasks to Objective 9, firstly the work required by each of the newly formed sub-groups, agreed at the engagement event the previous day; and secondly, a task to ensure the Committee is represented appropriately by CNCB and independent members.
- iv. Add two additional tasks to Objective 10, firstly the actions to reflect the engagement activities and relationship between Committee and staff; and secondly the offer by members earlier in the meeting to support staff

learning initiatives and the CPD programme, through coaching and mentoring.

10.4 Committee noted the importance of having a set of clear working objectives.

10.5 Committee **discussed** their input to the working objectives for 2021/22 (Annex 1) for inclusion in a report to be presented to the intersessional meeting in April. Committee **discussed** any changes to the current working objectives and **provided** a steer for the drafting of objectives for 2022/23. Members **noted** the next Joint Committee effectiveness survey would take place in July.

Action point(s)
AP19 Mrs Quince to produce a final report on members contributions to the 2021/22 working objectives and produce a draft set of objectives for 2022/23, taking into account the changes detailed in paragraph 10.3 (i-iv) and present to the intersessional meeting on 26 April.

11 Joint Committee Forward Programme (Official) (JNCC 22 13D)

11.1 Committee **confirmed** they were content with the proposed forward programme.

11.2 The next intersessional meeting will be on Monday 21st March to discuss and agree proposals in relation to QQR7 and Fletton Quays. Professor Galbraith emphasised the need for the meeting to be quorate in order for decisions to be taken. The next intersessional meeting after that, will take place on 26th April.

11.3 The next full Committee meeting will be an in-person meeting on 8-9th June in Edinburgh. A full itinerary for the two days of meetings would be available shortly. Dr Harper confirmed that Ms Osowska had invited JNCC's Executive Leadership Team to meet with NatureScot's SLT whilst in Edinburgh.

12 Any Other Business (Official) (Oral)

12.1 A note had been circulated to the Committee on 24 February informing members of Professor Scott's resignation. Professor Galbraith, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Professor Scott for her contribution to the Committee's work over the past four years and wished her well for the future. Dr Harper added her thanks

for her excellent work with the Committee. Professor Galbraith invited Professor Scott to join the June Committee dinner in Edinburgh.

- 12.2 Mrs Quince asked for a volunteer for the next JNCC vlog. These had been well received by staff and a valuable addition to the communications piece about the key discussion points from Committee meetings.

Action point(s)
AP20 Mrs Elliott to invite Professor Scott to the June Joint Committee dinner in Edinburgh.