



The one-hundred-and-first meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held at 0900 hours on 20 November 2014, at JNCC, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1JY

This paper was provided to the Joint Committee for discussion. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for Committee's position on the paper.

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Includes confidential annex

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Chief Executive's report on topical issues

Paper by Marcus Yeo

1. Overview

- 1.1. A considerable amount of effort in recent weeks has been directed to planning for 2015/16. The current planning round is proving to be particularly challenging because of severe financial pressures and is requiring tough choices to be made about priorities and financial allocations. The current position is summarised in a separate paper to the November Committee meeting.
- 1.2. Looking longer term, good progress is being made in reviewing JNCC's strategy. A two-day senior staff workshop in October generated a lot of ideas, supplementing the paper prepared by the Chair on his observations after his first 100 days in post. The outputs from the staff workshop will be discussed by the Committee's strategy sub-group on 14 November, and an oral update will be presented at the Committee meeting later in the month.
- 1.3. The new JNCC structure (mentioned in the report on topical issues to the September Committee meeting) has been refined following discussion with senior staff (see Annex 1). Transitional arrangements are now being put in place to pave the way for formal establishment of the new directorates in April 2015.
- 1.4. While preparing for the future we have been careful to maintain our focus on delivering the work programme set out in our business plan for 2014/15. The position at the half-way point in the year is summarised in the performance report presented to the November Committee meeting. The Executive Management Board considers the overall organisational performance to be good.

2. Ministerial engagement

- 2.1. The Chair and Chief Executive met Lord de Mauley (Defra minister with responsibility for JNCC) on 6 October. The minister expressed satisfaction with JNCC's performance and had a constructive discussion with the Chair about JNCC's future direction.
- 2.2. Meetings with Carl Sargeant (Minister for Natural Resources in the Welsh Government) and Paul Wheelhouse (Minister for Environment and Climate Change in the Scottish Government) will take place in December.

3. Protected areas workshop

- 3.1. On 24 October JNCC hosted a workshop: *Protected areas now and into the future – their role in biodiversity conservation*. Chris Gilligan chaired the day with 33 attendees from academia, the NGO sector, the country nature conservation bodies and JNCC (staff and Committee members). The

workshop objectives were to address the key questions raised by the Joint Committee paper on protected areas (most recently discussed by Committee in June 2014), and to consider the overall conservation vision for the UK into which protected areas could fit. Five discussion topics were explored throughout the day:

- i. How can wider countryside measures/ the ecosystem approach and protected areas be better integrated?
 - ii. How could conservation outcomes improve over the short, medium and long term – what are the issues within each timeframe? What role do we want protected areas to play at each spatial scale?
 - iii. How do we engage the public on protected areas and what are the main issues?
 - iv. Reduced, level or increasing resources – where are the priorities under each scenario?
 - v. What evidence do we need to inform decisions on the role of protected areas?
- 3.2. In the final plenary everyone agreed that discussions had been interesting and productive, and all expressed interest in commenting on the workshop outputs and conclusions. JNCC is currently preparing the workshop report which will be circulated to attendees and to key contacts within the country conservation bodies, prior to wider general circulation.
- 3.3. It was unanimously accepted that there is still a need for wider debate regarding the role of protected areas and that the workshop had been a useful step in the process. During the workshop several actions were identified from each of the five discussion topics, covering research, policy and implementation, and these will be included in an outcomes section of the workshop report. Two actions that were seen as particularly important were taking advantage of lessons learnt and best practice regarding protected areas management across Europe, and enhancing communication about the role of protected areas to wider audiences.

Annex 1 – New JNCC structure (in confidence)