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## **JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

### **JNCC CORPORATE PLAN FOR 2003-06**

**Paper by Marcus Yeo**

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1. At their meeting on 10 December 2002, Joint Committee discussed JNCC's draft corporate plan for 2003-2006, comprising a detailed business plan for 2003/04 and an overview of likely developments in 2004/05 and 2005/06. The plan was based on proposed funding of £5.809 million for 2003/04. The paper included options for amending the proposed work programme if the final grant-in-aid figure was lower than the preferred figure.
- 1.2. Committee endorsed the revised layout of the plan (with projects arranged within the seven themes described in the Statement of Strategic Direction). They approved the key targets and agreed that priority should be given to meeting country agency pay settlements and implementing the FMPR recommendations.
- 1.3. We have not yet received formal notification of our grant in aid for 2003-06. However, Defra have indicated informally that they are working to a figure of £5.526 million for 2003/04. This is nearly £300k short of the required budget. Defra have also indicated that they are unable to provide indicative allocations for 2004/05 and 2005/06 until they have completed a baseline review of their activities and funding. They have suggested that we should prepare a corporate plan on the basis of level funding for the three-year period, but should also include a preferred funding scenario for 2004/05 and 2005/06.
- 1.4. During January and February, Support Unit staff have revised the corporate plan to take account of the funding situation described in paragraph 1.3. The work programme for 2003/04 has been amended to align with anticipated grant in aid, and plans for 2004/05 and 2005/06 have been fleshed out. The main alterations to the 2003/04 work programme are itemised in Annex A.

#### **2. Financial considerations**

- 2.1. To a significant extent, work programmes and budgets for 2003-06 are constrained by two factors:
  - i. the costs of FMPR implementation, and in particular the likely costs of harmonising terms and conditions for JNCC staff;
  - ii. country agency pay deals (which all contain guaranteed pay progression).

- 2.2. Delaying the timetable for establishing JNCC as a company limited by guarantee will spread the costs of FMPR implementation over a longer time period. In 2003/04, the increase in JNCC's salary bill will be offset by a special payment from English Nature, estimated to be approximately £89k. However, despite these mitigating factors, the overall effect over the three-year period is a steep rise in salary costs. Set against Defra's request to plan on the basis of level funding for 2003-06, there is inevitably a substantial impact on programme costs (see Annex B).
- 2.3. Given that salaries account for over 50% of JNCC's total budget, and that a high proportion of programme costs is tied up in long-term projects (e.g. monitoring and surveillance programmes), it would cause the organisation major problems if funding was capped at 2003/04 levels for the following two years. The only options for achieving this are:
- i. making substantial cuts to core projects; or
  - ii. accepting that many posts will not be filled when staff leave.

Both of these options would entail major shifts in JNCC's priorities.

- 2.4. For these reasons, work programmes have not at this stage been prepared on the basis of level funding for three years, pending discussion by Committee. Instead, the corporate plan contains two options:
- i. a minimum funding scenario, in which no major new projects are initiated in 2004/05 or 2005/06 and all inflationary costs are absorbed. Although programme costs decline by over £200k under this scenario, this is more than compensated for by the increase in salaries;
  - ii. a more realistic funding scenario that reflects a modest enhancement of existing work programmes, in line with the planning figures given in the corporate plan for 2002/03 and the submission to the 2002 Spending Review.

- 2.5. The two funding scenarios are summarised below.

	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>
Minimum funding scenario	£5.615m <sup>1</sup>	£5.705m	£5.798m
Required funding scenario	£5.615m <sup>1</sup>	£6.380m	£6.679m

### **3. The revised corporate plan for 2003-06**

- 3.1. The latest draft of JNCC's corporate plan for 2003-06 is contained in Annex C. For each of the seven strategic themes the following information is provided:

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<sup>1</sup> Includes a special payment of £89k from English Nature to cover the costs of pay progression in 2003/04

- i. introduction;
- ii. drivers of JNCC's work (including links to Government targets and priorities);
- iii. a summary of achievements in 2002/03 (not yet completed);
- iv. an overview of plans for 2003-06;
- v. targets for 2003-06, based on the minimum funding scenario described in paragraphs 2.4.-2.5.;
- vi. a summary of additional work that could be undertaken in 2004/05 and 2005/06 under a more realistic funding scenario;
- vii. a summary of planned resources.

#### **4. Next steps**

- 4.1. Some additional work is needed to complete the corporate plan. Remaining tasks include adding summaries of achievements in 2002/03, updating the details of Government targets (e.g. to add information on Welsh Assembly targets), and deciding on final presentation and lay-out.
- 4.2. Following discussion by Committee, we are committed to circulating the final draft plan to Defra and devolved administrations prior to publication.
- 4.3. Once funding levels have been agreed and final amendments made, the corporate plan will be published (both as hard copy and on the JNCC website) in April.

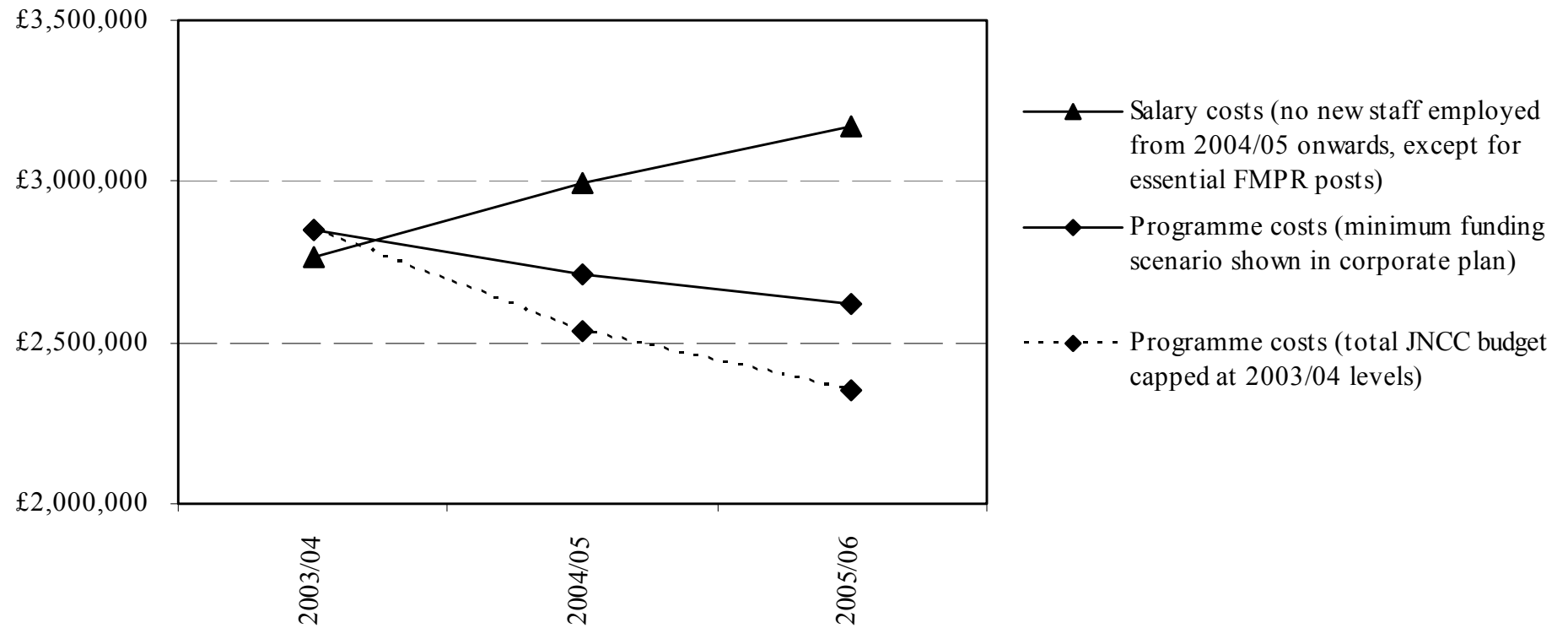
#### **5. Action by Committee**

- 5.1. Committee is asked to:
  - i. **consider** the draft JNCC corporate plan for 2003-06 contained as Annex C to this paper, and advise on any amendments;
  - ii. **decide** how to resolve the funding implications outlined in section 2;
  - iii. **agree** a process and timetable for finalising the plan.

**Annex A. Main amendments made to the corporate plan to align the work programme for 2003/04 with anticipated funding**

- Reduction in the level of advice given to support the work of Conservation of Arctic Flora & Fauna (CAFF)
- Preparation of best-practice guidance on the application of ecosystem management in the UK postponed until 2004/05 (if sufficient funds are available at that time)
- Timetable extended for the conversion of Geological Conservation Review (GCR) volumes to a searchable electronic format
- Co-ordination of the mammal Winter Transect and Sign project deferred until sufficient funds become available
- Reduced support for the Common Standards Monitoring programme, and in particular the development of monitoring guidance for marine features
- Timetable extended for the development of a framework and standards for the surveillance and monitoring of terrestrial, freshwater and coastal Annex I and BAP priority habitats
- Reduced collation and analysis of marine biodiversity data in support of work on the Government's *State of the Seas* report
- Timetable extended for completing the development of marine Recorder
- Deadline for establishment of JNCC as a company limited by guarantee pushed back from April 2004 to April 2005
- Assessment of the application of the Business Excellence Model to JNCC postponed

**Annex B. Impact of rising salary costs on programme costs**





## **Annex C**

### **Introduction**

#### **Overview**

This corporate plan sets out the contribution that JNCC will make to nature conservation in the UK and more widely during 2003-06. It is the first full three-year plan to be prepared in line with the revised funding arrangements for JNCC agreed by Government in 2002.

The plan is based on grant in aid for 2003/04 of £5.615 million<sup>2</sup>. Because of uncertainties regarding budgets for 2004/05 and 2005/06, two funding scenarios are presented for these years: one based on minimum funding for these two years, in which no major new projects are initiated and all inflationary costs are absorbed, and one based on an increase of 19% in line with priorities identified in the submission to the 2002 Spending Review.

The plan is structured around the seven themes identified in the Statement of Strategic Direction agreed by the Joint Committee in December 2002:

- i. providing advice on international nature conservation issues;
- ii. furthering nature conservation in a European context;
- iii. providing scientific advice on the sustainable use of natural resources;
- iv. developing common standards for nature conservation and co-ordinating UK approaches;
- v. assessing the status of UK biodiversity and earth heritage;
- vi. making nature conservation information accessible;
- vii. supporting the JNCC's business by providing high-quality services.

An account of each of the seven work programmes is provided, comprising a summary of achievements in 2002/03, an overview of plans for 2003-06, and associated targets. Wherever possible, targets are presented as outputs rather than inputs or actions, but this is problematic for some areas of JNCC's work. In particular, our advisory work is often reactive and difficult to quantify.

#### **Drivers of JNCC's work**

The overall thrust of our work programme for 2003-06 is determined by our statutory responsibilities, as described in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Beyond this, our priorities have been informed by UK and European legislation (e.g. the EU Habitats and Birds Directives), international environmental conventions (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity), and national programmes and policies (e.g. the UK Biodiversity Action Plan).

We have also ensured that we are making an appropriate contribution to Government's objectives by linking our work to UK departments' Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for 2003-06, and to similar targets set by the devolved administrations.

The main drivers for each of our work programmes are itemised in the relevant section of the plan.

#### **Strategic direction**

JNCC's Statement of Strategic Direction summarises our current position and includes elements of a forward look. However, further strategic thinking is needed to shape the organisation's long-term direction and to set clear high-level priorities and objectives. This work is already underway and is scheduled for completion by September 2003. The work programmes set out in this plan may need to be adjusted to take account of the outcomes from the strategic development.

Although a fully-formed strategy for JNCC is not yet in place, the priorities and targets contained in this corporate plan have been informed by the ongoing process of strategic development. We have taken account of the following opportunities for enhancing our contribution to nature conservation in the UK and internationally:

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<sup>2</sup> This figure includes a special payment of £89k from English Nature to cover the costs of pay progression in 2003/04



- increased emphasis in UK Government and the devolved administrations on the importance of sustainable development;
- opportunities for achieving nature conservation benefits in the UK through influencing policy development and implementation at European and global scales;
- increasing demand from Government for JNCC's services, particularly for advice on international issues and nature conservation in the offshore marine environment;
- the *Modernising Government* agenda, and in particular the emphasis on joined-up, outcome-focused policies that have a sound scientific basis;
- opportunities for delivering our work more efficiently and effectively following implementation of the FMPR recommendations.

We have also sought to build on our strengths, which include:

- expertise and experience in partnership working and networking;
- access to numerous biodiversity data sets derived from monitoring and surveillance schemes;
- expertise in managing, disseminating and sharing biodiversity and earth heritage information;
- ability to look outwards (to Europe and beyond) and assess the implications for UK nature conservation.

### **Key targets for 2003/04**

Our work programme for 2003-06 covers a wide span of activities, and this is reflected in the diverse range of targets. Some of these targets are considered to be of particular importance in 2003/04, because they help to achieve significant nature conservation benefits, or meet the requirements of key stakeholders, or deliver especially timely products. These have been designated as key targets, and are our highest priorities for the corporate plan period. Assessment of organisational performance over the next year will depend to a large degree on our success in achieving these goals.

The key targets for 2003/04 are summarised below. More detail is given in the sections of the plan dealing with specific work programmes.

#### **Providing advice on international nature conservation issues**

- Provide scientific advice to Defra and country agencies on the implementation of the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**; in particular:
  - advise Defra on the development of a UK strategy for CBD implementation, and provide technical support at the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties in 2004
  - produce strategies for UK implementation of CBD decisions concerning marine ecosystems, the Global Taxonomy Initiative, and alien invasive species
  - co-ordinate UK implementation of CBD decisions concerning the global plant strategy and mountain ecosystems
- Provide scientific advice to Government on UK, EC and global policy and practice relating to the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)**; in particular:
  - provide on-line advice to Defra on approximately 24,000 licence consultations to service standards (90% within 5 days, 8% within 10 days)
  - provide expert opinion and high-quality advice promptly in support of enforcement activity and prosecutions under CITES-related legislation
- Work with Government, statutory agencies and NGOs to prepare and deliver a UK implementation programme for the **Ramsar Convention** Strategic Plan 2003-2008 following the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties in 2002
- Provide support to FCO and Overseas Territory governments on the development and implementation of conservation initiatives and conventions in the **UK Overseas Territories**

#### **Furthering nature conservation in a European context**

- By providing high-quality technical advice, seek to influence **European environmental programmes and strategies** (including the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme Thematic Strategies on Marine and Soils, the EC Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy) so that they deliver nature conservation gains in the UK and across Europe

- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government, country agencies and others regarding implementation of the **EU Habitats Directive** in the UK; in particular:
  - complete the submission to the European Commission of an agreed list of UK SACs, enabling the formal adoption of a list of SCIs for the Atlantic Biogeographical Region by September 2003
  - by March 2004, develop an agreed UK position on the practical interpretation and application of ‘favourable conservation status’
- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government, country agencies and others regarding implementation of the **EU Birds Directive** in the UK; in particular, support the selection of SPAs by commissioning research on raptors in coastal situations in winter to inform site selection and boundary issues
- Support full implementation of the **Habitats and Birds Directives in the marine environment** and especially beyond 12 nm by providing advice to Government on:
  - possible SACs for offshore Annex I habitats (*ca* six sites in 2003/04), and where appropriate additional inshore sites away from the coast
  - extensions to existing coastal breeding colony SPAs for guillemot, razorbill, puffin and gannet
  - inshore SPAs for non-breeding seabirds (two sites in 2003/04)
  - methodology for identifying SPAs for offshore bird feeding areas
  - SAC selection criteria for Annex II cetaceans (in both territorial waters and offshore)
- Support Government in implementing the **EU Water Framework Directive** in the UK by providing advice on technical issues, such as the development of monitoring programmes, characterisation of water bodies, and register of protected areas

#### **Providing scientific advice on the sustainable use of natural resources**

- Provide advice to DTI and others on issues associated with **marine industry**, including about 45 Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), 400 EIA dispensations, 35 oil spill contingency plans, 30 dumping licences, 120 seismic applications and 30 miscellaneous items, within timescales established in negotiation with customers
- Provide advice to DTI to enable full **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** to be carried out prior to further offshore renewables licensing and SEA4 research and process to be carried out fully prior to oil and gas licensing
- Ensure that **air pollution policies** take nature conservation interests fully into account by providing technical advice to Government; in particular:
  - contribute to revision of the UK Air Quality Strategy
  - respond to Government consultations on reducing ammonia emissions
- Ensure that vulnerable **habitats and species within SACs are protected from air pollution** by developing and promoting robust approaches to undertaking ‘appropriate assessments’ under the Habitats Directive, in consultation with Government, statutory agencies, power generators and others
- Complete the **Irish Sea Pilot Project** and publish a final report, including conservation objectives, an assessment of how the approach contributes to sustainable development, and recommendations for changes to existing nature conservation mechanisms (legislation, enforcement and governance)

#### **Developing common standards for nature conservation and co-ordinating UK approaches**

- Enhance the **UK BAP website** and the content of the NBN Gateway so that together they can handle the information required for the 2005 BAP reporting target and manage the information needed for research co-ordination
- In partnership with Defra, promote and enable **biodiversity research** which supports the delivery of UK BAP objectives; in particular:
  - establish a collaborative programme for commissioning biodiversity research projects
  - update web-based catalogues of research projects and research requirements
  - prepare fully developed research programmes for introduced species and one other cross-cutting programme by adding detail, prioritising research requirements and identifying important gaps

#### **Assessing the status of UK biodiversity and earth heritage**

- By March 2004, agree with key partners a costed action plan to develop a framework and standards for the **surveillance and monitoring of terrestrial, freshwater and coastal Annex I and BAP priority habitats**
- Develop a system for **monitoring habitat, species and earth heritage interest features on SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites**, in close collaboration with the country agencies and other organisations; in particular:

- by May 2003, ensure that guidance for monitoring habitat, species and earth heritage interest features on designated sites is made available to country agencies and other organisations through the JNCC website
- by February 2004, produce an interim report summarising available site monitoring results for the UK
- by December 2003, agree a comprehensive quality assurance programme for designated site monitoring
- by March 2004, review all monitoring guidance in light of use during the 2003 field season, paying particular attention to marine habitats and problematic species groups such as lower plants and invertebrates

#### **Making nature conservation information accessible**

- By March 2004, establish a **performance specification for the NBN Gateway** taking into account the likely volume of information growth and estimates of usage by JNCC priority audiences over the next three years, and provide costed options for meeting this
- Deliver **improvements to the NBN Gateway** so that it meets the needs of JNCC and partner organisations; in particular:
  - enhance the Gateway so that new surveillance data can be added incrementally as they are processed and validated, and apply the enhancement so that four surveillance schemes, a BAP lead partner and a local records centre are supplying data in this way
  - enhance the Gateway so that errors in data identified through use, or through organised validation by schemes, can be collected and passed back to the manager of the relevant data set
- Co-ordinate access to NBN standards of **JNCC species and habitat information sources**, and by March 2004 provide NBN access to JNCC habitat data sets, and surveillance data for birds, seabirds and butterflies
- Revise the **JNCC website** so that it contains balanced coverage of UK-level conservation issues, and allows users to efficiently find information and advice

#### **Supporting the JNCC's business by providing high-quality services**

- By September 2003, complete a comprehensive review of **JNCC's strategic position**, identify strategic goals and priorities, and begin to draw up operational strategies
- By April 2004, make substantial progress towards implementing the recommendations arising from JNCC's **FMPR** by:
  - working with Defra to progress to the scrutiny stage a Regulatory Reform Order
  - preparing draft governance documents for the new organisation
  - progressing the negotiation of a single set of terms and conditions for JNCC staff

## **Providing advice on international nature conservation issues**

### **Introduction**

Nature conservation within the UK cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the world. The UK environment is affected by factors that operate at a global scale (e.g. climate change and sea-level rise), and the implications for biodiversity and earth heritage conservation have to be assessed within this wider context. In addition, Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are increasingly setting the agenda for nature conservation activities in the UK. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity (adopted in 1992 at the Rio 'Earth Summit') stimulated the development and implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and promoted the concept of sustainable development.

The Government has environmental responsibilities and obligations that extend beyond the UK, in particular relating to the 16 UK Overseas Territories. Although they occupy a relatively small area, the Overseas Territories make a major contribution to global biodiversity. Examples include the rich endemic flora and fauna of St Helena and other isolated island territories, the breeding bird assemblages of the Falkland Islands, and the coral reefs of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The UK Government also has a wider interest in environmental issues, especially in the context of sustainable development in developing countries.

### **Drivers of JNCC's work**

The main drivers of our work are:

- Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), in particular:
  - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
  - Bonn Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and daughter agreements
  - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
  - Ramsar Convention on the Conservation of Wetlands of International Importance
  - World Heritage Convention
  - Oslo and Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the north-east Atlantic (OSPAR)
- FCO PSA target:
  - Improvement in the ... environment ... of the overseas territories ..., as measured by implementation of the commitments in the 1999 White Paper

### **Achievements in 2002/03**

[to be completed]

### **Overview of the next three years**

Our overall aims are:

- to provide high-quality, timely advice to Government and country agencies on the implementation of MEAs and subsidiary agreements within the UK and globally in order to influence positive conservation action by these instruments;
- to support Government in the development and implementation of conservation initiatives and policies in the wider international environment, and in particular in the UK Overseas Territories.

The JNCC's knowledge and expertise mean that we are well-placed to advise Government and others on international nature conservation issues. Demand for our services from the FCO and others has risen over the past few years and we anticipate that this trend will continue. Consequently, we will need to prioritise our work carefully and allocate resources accordingly.

Over the next three years, we will continue to provide technical and scientific support to Government to enable the effective implementation of MEAs, focusing resources on the major global conventions such as CBD, Ramsar and CITES. We will participate in UK delegations attending key international meetings, and will provide advice sufficient to maintain the effectiveness of negotiations and the reputation of the UK for high-quality scientific input. We will also support implementation of MEAs within the UK by co-ordinating relevant

activities, including the preparation of reports, development of UK strategies and action plans, and provision of specialist services. We will continue to develop synergies between MEAs, treating the CBD as an overarching convention.

Work in the UK's Overseas Territories will also be a high priority over the plan period, in recognition of their high biodiversity value and Government's priorities. We will provide support to FCO and Overseas Territories governments to help implement MEAs and also to develop and implement other conservation initiatives.

## **Targets for 2003-06 on minimum funding**

### **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

- Provide scientific advice to Defra and country agencies on the implementation of the CBD; in particular:
  - advise Defra on the development of a UK strategy for CBD implementation, and provide technical support at Conferences of Parties in 2004 and 2006
  - by March 2004, produce strategies for UK implementation of CBD decisions concerning marine ecosystems, the Global Taxonomy Initiative, and alien invasive species, and co-ordinate implementation from 2004 onwards
  - co-ordinate UK implementation of CBD decisions concerning the global plant strategy and mountain ecosystems
- Develop the content of the CBD Clearing House Mechanism website and the JNCC website so that together they efficiently support reporting obligations, and provide access to implementation examples to other countries

### **Bonn Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**

- Provide scientific advice to Defra and country agencies on the implementation of CMS and six daughter agreements:
  - Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS)
  - Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe
  - Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia
  - Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels
  - African/Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)
  - Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)

### **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)**

- Provide scientific advice to Government on UK, EC and global CITES policy and practice; in particular:
  - provide on-line advice to Defra on approximately 24,000 licence consultations to service standards (90% within 5 days, 8% within 10 days)
  - provide expert opinion and high-quality advice promptly in support of enforcement activity and prosecutions under CITES-related legislation
  - support Defra at the Conference of Parties in October 2004
- Provide a service to Defra that will add content to the CITES website within one working week of a request

### **Ramsar Convention on the Conservation of Wetlands of International Importance**

- Work with Government, statutory agencies and NGOs to prepare and deliver a UK implementation programme for the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008 following the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties in 2002
- Facilitate the implementation of the Ramsar Convention globally and in the UK; in particular:
  - provide technical support to Defra at the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties in 2005
  - contribute scientific expertise through membership of the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel
- In liaison with Government and country agencies, complete a strategic review of the existing UK network of Ramsar sites by 2004, identify significant gaps in coverage, and update Ramsar Information Sheets for all sites

### **World Heritage Convention and other international earth heritage advice**

- Provide scientific advice to DCMS on the development and implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the UK and overseas
- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Defra and the Council of Europe on the development of a European strategy for geological conservation
- Promote UK approaches and facilitate dialogue with other countries by holding a major international earth heritage conference in Dorset in autumn 2004
- By June 2003, submit draft guidelines to IUCN on the selection of important international geological sites

### **Oslo and Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the north-east Atlantic (OSPAR)**

- Provide scientific advice to the Biodiversity Committee and Defra on a) programmes and measures for threatened species and habitats, b) Ecological Quality Objectives (in particular, any that are sponsored by Defra), and c) Marine Protected Areas
- Complete revisions to the European Nature Information System (EUNIS) marine habitat classification for the north-east Atlantic, on the basis of literature reviews received from Contracting Parties, by March 2004
- Begin to identify Marine Protected Areas within UK waters in 2005/06

### **UK Overseas Territories**

- Provide support to FCO and Overseas Territory governments on the development and implementation of conservation initiatives and conventions in the UK Overseas Territories, and in particular support the implementation of Environment Charters
- By March 2004, compile a contextual audit of seabird resources in the Overseas Territories and develop thinking on the establishment of surveillance programmes

### **Conservation of Arctic Flora & Fauna (CAFF)**

- Contribute to the conservation of Arctic wildlife (especially of shared migratory populations and relict species occurring in the UK) by providing technical advice to support the work of CAFF, focusing initially on seabirds

### **World Conservation Union (IUCN)**

- Contribute to nature conservation globally and in the UK by providing an effective and efficient secretariat service to the UK Committee of the IUCN

### **Enhanced funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06**

With increased funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06, we would:

- Complete a mapping programme for priority habitats within the OSPAR area by 2005
- Provide increased support for conservation initiatives in the Overseas Territories, in response to priorities agreed with FCO and Overseas Territory governments
- Provide a fuller advisory service to Government on the implementation of CAFF, based on a strategic view of priorities

### **Planned resources**

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Salaries		148	157 (157)	168 (168)
Direct expenditure		91	83 (101)	72 (92)
<b>Total</b>		<b>239</b>	<b>240 (258)</b>	<b>240 (260)</b>

## **Furthering nature conservation in a European context**

### **Introduction**

Environmental legislation and policy in the UK are increasingly influenced by developments in Europe, and particularly within the European Union (EU). In recent years, the UK nature conservation agencies have put substantial resources into implementing the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, and especially identifying Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) as part of a Europe-wide network of important wildlife sites (Natura 2000). The agencies are now also engaged in discussions regarding the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, which is likely to deliver significant benefits to aquatic ecosystems. These directives are supplemented by a range of cross-cutting initiatives, including the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme, the EC Biodiversity Strategy and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. At a wider geographical scale, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) provides a framework for Europe-wide implementation of the CBD. Also relevant are sectoral EU policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which have a major impact on biodiversity in the UK (see page 10 of this plan).

### **Drivers of JNCC's work**

The main drivers of our work are:

- EU Directives:
  - Habitats Directive
  - Birds Directive
  - Water Framework Directive
- European strategies and programmes:
  - 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme
  - EC Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans
  - EU Sustainable Development Strategy
  - Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS)
- Bern Convention on Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats

### **Achievements in 2002/03**

[to be completed]

### **Overview of the next three years**

Our overall aims are:

- to maximise nature conservation gain by influencing more effectively EU nature conservation policy, legislation and practice in order, and aiding integration between UK, global and European initiatives;
- to work with others to implement European directives, strategies and programmes within the UK, by providing high-quality advice, co-ordinating effort, and setting common standards.

Because the European context for nature conservation in the UK is so important, it is essential that the conservation agencies engage adequately with the European Commission and other relevant institutions, taking into account future developments such as EU enlargement. This must be a two-way process – on the one hand looking outwards and attempting to influence developing thinking in Europe by providing sound scientific advice, and on the other keeping abreast of current thinking, and advising on implementation and best practice within the UK. The JNCC has an important part to play in this process. Our ability to provide high-quality advice and intelligence has been enhanced greatly by the establishment in 2001 of the UK Nature and Landscape Office in Brussels, and over the next three years we will build on this foundation, targeting those areas where we believe we can make a significant difference. In particular, we will seek to influence the development and implementation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme and other major cross-cutting initiatives.

Within the UK, implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives will remain a high priority. We will pay particular attention to the marine environment (and especially offshore), where selection of SACs and SPAs is still far from complete. Over the plan period we will continue to co-ordinate this work, liaising with European

partners as appropriate, and provide advice to Government on the identification of sites. In the terrestrial, freshwater and coastal environments, the site selection process is substantially complete, and over the next three years JNCC's work will increasingly be focused on developing systems to meet the monitoring and reporting obligations of the Directives (see pages 17-20 of this plan). This will include working towards an agreed interpretation of 'favourable conservation status'.

The Water Framework Directive offers considerable opportunities for enhancing biodiversity, and over the plan period we will seek to maximise these opportunities by working closely with the conservation and environment agencies to develop common standards and co-ordinate aspects of implementation in the UK.

## **Targets for 2003-06 on minimum funding**

### **Bern Convention on Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats**

- Provide scientific advice to Defra and country agencies on the Standing Committee and intersessional work of the Bern Convention

### **EU and wider European nature conservation policies**

- By providing high-quality technical advice, seek to influence the 6th Environmental Action Programme Thematic Strategies on Marine and Soils, the EC Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy so that they deliver nature conservation gains in the UK and across Europe
- Provide a high-quality enquiry and intelligence service for JNCC and the country agencies, by producing monthly briefings and 20 topic flash reports per year on EU processes for or affecting UK nature and landscape conservation

### **EU Habitats Directive**

- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government, country agencies and others regarding implementation of the Habitats Directive in the UK; in particular:
  - complete the submission to the European Commission of an agreed list of UK SACs, enabling the formal adoption of a list of SCIs for the Atlantic Biogeographical Region by September 2003
  - by March 2004, develop an agreed UK position on the practical interpretation and application of 'favourable conservation status'

### **EU Birds Directive**

- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government, country agencies and others regarding implementation of the Birds Directive in the UK; in particular, support the selection of SPAs by commissioning research to inform site selection and boundary issues:
  - raptors in coastal situations in winter, in 2003/04
  - the use of cropped habitats by birds that have a dependency upon these habitats (wintering waterbirds, birds of plantation forestry and breeding birds in various situations), in 2004/05
  - wintering gulls and raptors, in 2005/06

### **Marine Natura 2000**

- Support full implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives in the marine environment and especially beyond 12 nm by providing advice to Government on:
  - possible SACs for offshore Annex I habitats (*ca* six sites in 2003/04), and where appropriate additional inshore sites away from the coast
  - extensions to existing coastal breeding colony SPAs for guillemot, razorbill, puffin and gannet
  - inshore SPAs for non-breeding seabirds (two sites in 2003/04)
  - methodology for identifying SPAs for offshore bird feeding areas
  - SAC selection criteria for Annex II cetaceans (in both territorial waters and offshore)



**EU Water Framework Directive**

- Support Government in implementing the Water Framework Directive in the UK by providing advice on technical issues, such as the development of monitoring programmes, characterisation of water bodies, and register of protected areas

**Enhanced funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06**

With increased funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06, we would:

- Obtain robust scientific data to underpin the selection of offshore SACs by undertaking broadscale surveys of possible sites
- Support greater country agency engagement with Europe by providing additional value-added intelligence on emerging issues

**Planned resources**

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Salaries		291	305 (305)	323 (323)
Direct expenditure		222	222 (282)	217 (272)
<b>Total</b>		<b>513</b>	<b>528 (587)</b>	<b>540 (595)</b>

## **Providing scientific advice on the sustainable use of natural resources**

### **Introduction**

Human activities, such as farming, fishing, industry, transport and mineral extraction, have profound effects on the environment. The unsustainable use of natural resources as a consequence of these activities may lead to agricultural intensification deleterious fishing practices, declines in water quality and quantity, air pollution, and climate change. The consequences for biodiversity and earth heritage are potentially devastating, and present a major challenge to nature conservation bodies, especially when unsustainable practices are enshrined in national or European policy, such as the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies.

Work to influence resource use policies has to be seen within the context of sustainable development, which seeks to integrate economic growth, social progress and environmental protection, and is now placed firmly at the heart of Government policy making.

### **Drivers for JNCC's work**

The main drivers of our work are:

- UK Government PSA targets:
  - Promote sustainable development across Government and the country as a whole as measured by achieving positive trends in the Government's headline indicators of sustainable development (Defra PSA target); relevant headline indicators include:
    - reducing greenhouse gas emissions
    - reducing air pollution and improving air quality
    - improving river quality
    - reversing long-term declines in populations of farmland and woodland birds
  - Improve the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources ... to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5% from 1990 levels and moving towards a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2010 (Defra PSA target)
  - Improve air quality by meeting our National Air Quality Strategy objectives for carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, particles, sulphur dioxide, benzene and 1-3 butadiene (Defra/DfT PSA target, and similar Scottish Executive and Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) targets)
  - Reversing the long-term decline in the number of farmland birds by 2020, as measured annually against underlying trends (Defra PSA target)
  - Bringing into favourable condition by 2010 95% of all nationally important wildlife sites (Defra PSA target)
  - A modern, reformed and enlarged EU, as measured by progress towards UK policy priorities including ... CAP reform ... (FCO PSA target)
  - ... secure CAP reforms that reduce production-linked support, enabling enhanced EU funding for environmental conservation and rural development (Defra PSA target)
- Scottish Executive targets for 2003-06:
  - Bring in excess of 1,000 SSSIs into positive management by 2006
  - Improve quality of 50 km of rivers by 2003-04
  - Improve quality of 21 km of coastal waters by 2003-04
- Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) targets for 2002/2005:
  - To deliver progress against the integrated social, economic and environmental objectives of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy by working with other departments and public bodies, and with the private, voluntary and local government sectors
  - To maintain or improve Year 2000 levels of river water quality (both chemical and biological) with no deterioration in the classification of individual river reaches, year on year
  - To maintain or improve the conservation condition of 95% of the features underlying the designation of internationally important wildlife sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) by 2013

### **Achievements in 2002/03**

[to be completed]

## **Overview of the next three years**

Our overall aims are:

- to provide scientific information and advice on the nature conservation implications of resource use policies;
- to deliver co-ordinated UK-level advice on resource use policies, where this adds value to the work of the country agencies;
- to assess the effects of wide-scale environmental change on nature conservation in the UK, and advise on appropriate policy measures.

The main focus of our work in this area will be to influence UK, European and international policies on fisheries, agriculture, air pollution, pesticides, marine industry and soil use. Our goal is to ensure that nature conservation issues are taken fully into account and that the achievement of biodiversity targets (e.g. relating to protected sites and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan) is not compromised. This is a huge undertaking, and one in which we can only hope to achieve our aims by working closely with the country agencies and others, drawing on our skills and experience in partnership working. We will seek to ensure that all policy has a sound science base by drawing on our access to monitoring and surveillance data, and filling gaps in knowledge by commissioning targeted research and influencing the research programmes of other organisations.

In addition to providing information and advice on resource use policies at a UK and international level, we have a core role in advising on site-specific issues, such as Environmental Impact Assessments, beyond territorial waters. This will continue to be a high priority over the next three years. Where we have particular technical expertise (e.g. in relation to air pollution and GMOs), we will also support the country agencies in assessing potential impacts on terrestrial sites.

Increasingly, we will adopt an ecosystem-based approach to our work on resource use policy, seeking to consider the range of environmental pressures in a holistic manner and to integrate site-based protection measures with wider environmental programmes. This will make a significant contribution to sustainable development. We are currently trialing this approach as part of the Irish Sea Pilot Project, which will be completed in 2004. Over the period of the plan we intend to build on this work by assessing how ecosystem management approaches could be applied more widely in the UK, both in the terrestrial and marine environments. We will do this by drawing on international examples of best practice, and working closely with the country agencies and others to develop practical approaches in the UK.

## **Targets for 2003-06 on minimum funding**

### **Land use policy**

- Promote environmentally beneficial reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in 2006 by working with the inter-agency Land Use Policy Group to develop co-ordinated GB/UK views on land use policy issues, where this is appropriate
- Ensure that policies relating to the use of genetically modified organisms in the UK take full account of the potential impact on nature conservation; in particular:
  - provide technical advice to Government, e.g. on the release of GMOs
  - represent the views of the country agencies in the regulatory process through participation in the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment and other groups

### **Fisheries policy**

- Promote environmentally beneficial reform of the Common Fisheries Policy by providing high-quality advice and information on fishery issues to Government and country agencies; in particular:
  - obtain agreement/understanding of policy positions by European Nature Conservation and Fisheries Advisory Network (ENCFAN) partners
  - ensure at least one country agency representative on a Regional Advisory Council
  - by March 2004, agree an inter-agency position on an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management

### **Offshore industries**

- Each year, provide advice to DTI and others on about 45 Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), 400 EIA dispensations, 35 oil spill contingency plans, 30 dumping licences, 120 seismic applications and 30

- miscellaneous items within timescales established in negotiation with customers
- Provide advice to DTI to enable full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be carried out prior to further offshore renewables licensing and SEA4 research and process to be carried out fully prior to oil and gas licensing
  - Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government, country agencies and others on a) introduced marine species, b) renewable energy sources, c) all offshore oil spills, d) shipping issues, including further development of the clean ship concept, and e) gravel extraction applications
  - By March 2004, produce a new oil pollution vulnerability method and atlas

### **Air pollution**

- Ensure that air pollution policies take nature conservation interests fully into account by providing technical advice to Government; in particular in 2003/04:
  - contribute to revision of the UK Air Quality Strategy
  - respond to Government consultations on reducing ammonia emissions
- Ensure that vulnerable habitats and species within SACs are protected from air pollution by developing and promoting robust approaches to undertaking 'appropriate assessments' under the Habitats Directive, in consultation with Government, statutory agencies, power generators and others
- Develop effective biomonitoring tools for atmospheric nitrogen, and encourage their use for assessing the effects of nitrogen on protected sites
- Provide the country agencies with specialist air pollution casework support and advice, as required

### **Climate change**

- Ensure that nature conservation policies and practices contain measures to mitigate, or adapt to, the impacts of climate change; in particular:
  - by March 2004, prepare an agreed JNCC position statement
  - provide technical advice to influence policy development at UK, European and global scales
- In liaison with Government and statutory agencies, develop an agreed JNCC position during 2003/04 on the changes needed to nature conservation policy and practice to
- Ensure that there is a sound scientific basis for assessing the implications of climate change for nature conservation by contributing to selected research projects; in particular:
  - contribute to a multi-partner project to assess climate change effects on landscapes and ecosystems in Britain and Ireland (MONARCH phase 2), completing in 2005/06
  - fund a three-year project to assess the implications of climate change on biodiversity in the Overseas Territories, completing in 2004/05
  - contribute to a four-year multi-partner study (MarClim) to predict the effects of climate change on marine biodiversity in Britain and Ireland, completing in 2004/05

### **Pesticides and toxic chemicals**

- Provide advice on the risks to farmland wildlife of the indirect effect of pesticides by commissioning work, jointly with Defra and industry
- Ensure that policies and practice for the use of pesticides and toxic substances take nature conservation issues fully into account, by providing technical advice to Government and statutory agencies

### **Integrated approaches to marine nature conservation**

- By March 2004, complete the Irish Sea Pilot Project and publish a final report, including conservation objectives, an assessment of how the approach contributes to sustainable development, and recommendations for changes to existing nature conservation mechanisms (legislation, enforcement and governance)
- Contribute to Defra's Review of Marine Nature Conservation (RMNC); in particular:
  - by March 2004, develop provisional criteria for the identification of nationally important marine habitats and species (to be submitted to Government as part of the RMNC recommendations)

### **Ecosystem management**

- Promote the application of ecosystem management approaches in the UK; in particular:
  - through discussion with country agencies, Government and others, assess links between the CBD

ecosystem approach and Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive river basin management plans, and other ecosystem-based approaches

- prepare a prioritised list of costed research proposals by December 2003

#### **Soil conservation**

- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government on the development of national soil strategies, selection of indicators and other issues, ensuring that nature conservation issues are adequately addressed
- Provide high-quality, timely advice on the development of European soils policy, in particular to ensure that nature conservation considerations are taken into account in the implementation of the soil thematic strategy in the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme and in the preparation of a Soil Monitoring Directive
- By March 2004, prepare a summary report on the links between soil conservation and biodiversity conservation within the country agencies
- By March 2006, complete an investigation of the relationships between soil properties and upland habitat mosaics, with the aim of identifying soils where habitat restoration is possible

#### **Earth heritage conservation**

- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government and country agencies on UK earth heritage conservation; in particular, by March 2004 provide DCMS with written advice on the possibilities for controlling the export of fossil specimens from the UK

#### **Enhanced funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06**

With increased funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06, we would:

- Provide technical support to Government, as required, following public consultation on the recommendations arising from the Review of Marine Nature Conservation in 2004
- Prepare best-practice guidance on the application of ecosystem management in the UK, by commissioning priority research
- Promote sustainable approaches to soil use by holding an international soil conservation seminar in 2005/06
- Support Defra in carrying out their cross-departmental lead role on sustainable development, by:
  - selecting indicators to illustrate the biodiversity impacts of resource use and development, and using these indicators to communicate biodiversity issues to other sectors and move development towards more sustainable approaches
  - providing biodiversity data and associated technical information with a view to making sustainable development work as a major tool for ensuring conservation of the wider environment

#### **Planned resources**

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Salaries		326	417 (417)	441 (441)
Direct expenditure		130	136 (186)	131 (176)
<b>Total</b>		<b>456</b>	<b>553 (603)</b>	<b>572 (617)</b>

## **Developing common standards for nature conservation and co-ordinating UK approaches**

### **Introduction**

This strategic theme relates directly to JNCC's statutory responsibilities as set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It recognises the contribution that JNCC makes to nature conservation by developing and maintaining certain common standards, and by co-ordinating UK-wide activities where this is more efficient and effective than the country agencies acting individually.

Since the Scotland Act and the Government of Wales Act were passed in 1998, environmental matters have largely been devolved to the country administrations, providing a powerful mechanism for tailoring environmental policies and practices to local circumstances. This has required JNCC and the country agencies to reassess how they work together and their respective roles. It has become clear that there is a continuing requirement for a central JNCC role, as this provides a stronger voice for UK nature conservation.

Common standards are also covered within other JNCC work programmes, e.g. standards for the selection of SACs and SPAs, for monitoring interest features on protected sites, and for the collection and storage of data.

### **Drivers of JNCC's work**

The main drivers of our work are:

- The UK Biodiversity Action Plan
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Government's headline indicators of sustainable development

### **Achievements in 2002/03**

[to be completed]

### **Overview of the next three years**

Our overall aims are:

- to provide effective UK co-ordination for key nature conservation initiatives and approaches, where this adds value to the work of the country agencies;
- to establish and maintain common standards for nature conservation across the UK;
- to disseminate knowledge about good practice in nature conservation.

JNCC has played a prominent part in the development and implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), supporting the work of country biodiversity groups and Habitat and Species Action Plan steering group. Over the coming three years this role will be strengthened. As chair of the newly-formed Biodiversity Action and Information Group, we will co-ordinate the 2005 reporting round and lead a review of biodiversity targets and the lists of priority habitats and species. We will also work with Defra to maintain an overview of research activities and requirements relating to the UK BAP, and to facilitate partnerships to undertake priority research.

JNCC has always provided a forum for bringing together views from the country agencies and beyond, both within the Joint Committee itself and through a wide range of inter-agency groups. This allows us to synthesise an integrated view, and where appropriate to provide GB or UK-wide advice to Government. Working through the Lead Co-ordination Networks and other specialist inter-agency groups, we will continue to provide a UK perspective on nature conservation issues and to disseminate knowledge about good practice. We will also continue to maintain common standards for habitat classifications, species status assessments, SSSI selection guidelines and biodiversity indicators, where necessary updating the standards and placing them in a European context.

Two major programmes of work relating to classification and description of the natural environment will reach important milestones during the plan period. The Marine Nature Conservation Review (MNCR) was initiated in 1987 with the aims of describing the characteristics, distribution and extent of marine habitats and communities

in Britain, and identifying important sites and species. The final sectoral reports will be published in 2003. In 2004, publication of the 42-volume Geological Conservation Review (GCR) will be completed, bringing to an end a 27-year programme of work that provides a comprehensive description of nationally and internationally important geological and geomorphological sites in Britain. As publication nears completion, our focus will shift to making this vast body of information more easily accessible by electronic means, and initiating a process to keep the GCR site series under regular review.

## **Targets for 2003-06 on minimum funding**

### **UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)**

- During 2003/04, enhance the UK BAP website and the content of the NBN Gateway so that together they can handle the information required for the 2005 BAP reporting target and manage the information needed for research co-ordination
- Use information from the 2002 BAP reporting round and the NBN to assess progress towards UK BAP targets
- In 2005, produce a report on implementation of the UK BAP, including a review of targets and a review of the lists of priority habitats and species
- Deliver UK information to support UK BAP implementation by country biodiversity groups and Habitat and Species Action Plan steering groups
- Assist the delivery of UK BAP targets by co-ordinating aspects of HAP and SAP implementation, in particular by providing the chair and secretariat for the Lowland Grasslands and Uplands HAP umbrella groups, and acting as lead partner for the cetaceans SAP
- By June 2003, publish an interpretation manual for BAP broad and priority habitats

### **Biodiversity research**

- In partnership with Defra, promote and enable biodiversity research which supports the delivery of UK BAP objectives; in particular:
  - establish a collaborative programme for commissioning biodiversity research projects by October 2003, and fully implement by October 2005
  - produce up-to-date, web-based catalogues of research projects and research requirements by October 2005, and make recommendations for research in new and existing programmes
  - by July 2003 prepare a fully developed research programme for introduced species by adding detail, prioritising research requirements and identifying important gaps, and by October 2005 refine the other five cross-cutting research programmes identified by the Biodiversity Research Working Group (BRWG)

### **Biodiversity indicators**

- Provide advice to Government regarding the development of national and international biodiversity indicators, linking these to indicators for other sectors, where appropriate
- Develop a framework and principles for the selection of biodiversity indicators and agree with key partners

### **Species status assessment**

- By December 2003, prepare a summary report assessing the benefits of reviewing and reporting species status at national, regional and European scales.
- Produce Red Lists for selected species groups, and disseminate through the JNCC website and as publications:
  - lichens and Aculeates (bees, wasps and ants) in 2003/04
  - seaweeds, spiders, hoverflies and caddis flies in 2004/05
  - micro-moths and ground beetles in 2005/06

### **Co-ordination of UK nature conservation policy and practice**

- Ensure that birds are protected during any prolonged period of cold winter weather that meets the agreed criteria for the imposition of a Severe Weather Order
- Provide advice to Defra on license applications for the importation/release of non-native species, and in 2003, prepare a response to Defra's review of non-native species policy

### Common standards for the selection of SSSIs

- By March 2004, publish updated SSSI selection guidelines for intertidal and lagoon habitats (based on the latest version of the marine biotope classification) (*scope of work on SSSI selection guidelines needs further discussion with country agencies*)

### Advice on habitat conservation

- Provide specialist advice and information to government, country agencies and others on UK and European habitat conservation issues, through six Lead Co-ordination Networks and one Lead Agency
- By October 2003, publish an *Illustrated Guide to British Upland Vegetation*, containing summary descriptions and distribution maps of all upland vegetation types

### Geological Conservation Review

- By March 2004, publish and promote eight further volumes of the GCR series, and publish the final six volumes by December 2004
- By July 2003, provide web access to a database holding basic information on all GCR sites
- By December 2003, formalise/update guidance for the system of adding and deleting sites from the GCR register in consultation with country agencies, and by March 2006 complete a review of site coverage in 25 GCR 'blocks'
- By March 2006, convert 8 GCR volumes to a searchable electronic format

### Habitat classifications

- By March 2004, publish MNCR summary volumes for West Scotland and North-west Scotland
- Maintain an overview of habitat and vegetation classifications in the UK and Europe, and develop processes to integrate UK classifications within a European context, e.g. through further development of SynBioSys Europe
- Maintain common standards in the use of the National Vegetation Classification (NVC); in particular:
  - by March 2004, publish a users handbook
  - by March 2006, set up and provide the secretariat for an expert committee to oversee changes to the NVC

### Enhanced funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06

With increased funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06, we would:

- Convert an additional 8 GCR volumes to a searchable electronic format
- Create some of the indicators agreed at UK, European and international scales, or adapt existing monitoring and surveillance schemes to meet indicator requirements
- Begin to co-ordinate monitoring and surveillance activities in support of UK BAP reporting
- Undertake work on alien invasive species arising from Defra's review of non-native species policy, if required by Government (*not costed*)

### Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Salaries		180	190 (214)	203 (228)
Direct expenditure		179	105 (135)	85 (115)
<b>Total</b>		<b>359</b>	<b>295 (349)</b>	<b>287 (343)</b>



## **Assessing the status of UK biodiversity and earth heritage**

### **Introduction**

Information on the status of the UK's biodiversity and earth heritage resource underpins much of the advisory work undertaken by JNCC and the country agencies. We need to know the extent and condition of the current resource, to detect temporal and spatial trends, and to identify the drivers of change. This information provides a robust scientific basis for assessing the effectiveness of existing nature conservation action, informing the development of resource use policies, and meeting the reporting requirements of EU directives and international environmental agreements.

JNCC currently supports a range of monitoring and surveillance programmes across the terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine environments of the UK, both within protected sites and in the wider environment. Most of the work is undertaken through long-term partnerships with statutory agencies and non-governmental organisations. We also work closely with the country agencies and others to set standards for monitoring techniques and approaches (e.g. common standards monitoring for protected sites).

### **Drivers of JNCC's work**

The main drivers of our work are:

- Surveillance and reporting obligations of MEAs, European directives and UK BAP
- Assessing progress against Defra's PSA targets:
  - Reversing the long-term decline in the number of farmland birds by 2020, as measured annually against underlying trends
  - Bringing into favourable condition by 2010 95% of all nationally important wildlife sites
  - Promote sustainable development across Government and the country as a whole as measured by achieving positive trends in the Government's headline indicators of sustainable development; relevant headline indicators include:
    - reducing greenhouse gas emissions
    - reducing air pollution and improving air quality
    - improving river quality
    - reversing long-term declines in populations of farmland and woodland birds
- Scottish Executive target for 2003-06: maintain 6-year cycle of monitoring condition of 3,800 features of natural heritage interest across 1,450 SSSIs
- Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) targets for 2002/2005:
  - To maintain or improve Year 2000 levels of river water quality (both chemical and biological) with no deterioration in the classification of individual river reaches, year on year
  - To maintain or improve the conservation condition of 95% of the features underlying the designation of internationally important wildlife sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) by 2013

### **Achievements in 2002/03**

[to be completed]

### **Overview of the next three years**

Our overall aims are:

- to obtain an overview of the status of UK biodiversity, both within protected sites and in the wider environment;
- to place UK monitoring and surveillance data within a European and international context.

One of the highest priorities over the next three years will be to maintain, and where possible enhance, existing surveillance schemes covering wetland and terrestrial birds, seabirds, mammals, butterflies, and pollutant levels in birds. These surveillance programmes represent a major investment by JNCC, the country agencies and others, and it is essential that their long-term future is secure.

Depending on available resources, we will seek to develop a more systematic approach to monitoring and surveillance so that we can obtain a rounded picture of the status of UK biodiversity and earth heritage. In particular, we will aim to establish surveillance programmes for the marine environment, for terrestrial, freshwater and coastal habitats (linked to the Government's Countryside Surveys), and for selected additional species groups. If funds allow, we will also forge closer links with European surveillance and monitoring programmes so that the status of UK biodiversity can be placed in a wider international context.

During the plan period implementation of the common standards monitoring programme for protected sites will be a high priority for the country agencies. JNCC will have a key role in ensuring that common standards are maintained by co-ordinating revisions to the guidance for monitoring interest features, and implementing a quality assurance programme. We may also be required to develop protocols for monitoring offshore marine sites once they become designated under the Habitats and Birds Directives.

Gathering nature conservation information through monitoring and surveillance programmes is not an end in itself. The information is of limited use unless it is accessible to those that need it. We will therefore continue our efforts to make key data sets available in a user-friendly format through the National Biodiversity Network. We will also trial techniques to integrate data from different sources to create wildlife statistics that provide an overview of the current status of UK biodiversity.

## **Targets for 2003-06 on minimum funding**

### **Habitat surveillance**

- By March 2004, agree with key partners a costed action plan to develop a framework and standards for the surveillance and monitoring of terrestrial, freshwater and coastal Annex I and BAP priority habitats; begin to implement plan in 2004/05, and develop an integrated UK-wide wetland inventory by March 2006
- By March 2004, convert JNCC habitat data sets to NBN standards and provide access through the NBN Gateway
- By December 2003, complete further analysis of Countryside Survey 2000 data to elucidate key changes in habitat extent and quality in the UK during 1990s (through a multi-partner contract with CEH), and assess the implications for nature conservation policy and practice
- From 2004 onwards, provide expert input to the development of the next UK-wide Countryside Survey to ensure that it adequately covers the interests of the statutory conservation agencies

### **Marine habitat surveillance**

- By March 2004, develop a comprehensive and fully costed programme for the surveillance of marine priority habitats (with the aim of meeting Habitats Directive and UK BAP requirements), and agree this with key partners; initiate surveillance programme in 2004/05
- By March 2004 organise a formal link with the National Marine Monitoring Programme to make its data available via the NBN, and establish close links with other national surveillance programmes

### **Seabed habitat mapping**

- By March 2005, compile maps of seabed habitats within UK waters and associated datasets into a GIS, focusing on Habitats Directive, OSPAR and BAP priority habitats
- By March 2006, develop a common interpretation of available mapping data and translate all data into a single classification system

### ***State of the Seas report***

- By December 2003, complete a draft assessment of marine biodiversity in UK waters (including national statistics) for inclusion in the Government's *State of the Seas* report

### **Bird surveillance**

- In partnership with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), produce annual reports from the Integrated Waterbird Database on the Wetland Bird Survey and reports on the monitoring of specific geese
- In partnership with the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) produce an annual report on rare breeding birds

- In partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), produce outputs from the Breeding Bird Survey, national ringing programme, bird survival and movement, alerts and population assessment, breeding performance and productivity, Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) low tide counts, special surveys and environmental change prediction
- By March 2004, enhance the web delivery of surveillance results for birds so that they can be searched by NBN, and can be flexibly grouped by pressures, species associations and other parameters

#### **Mammal surveillance**

- In partnership with the Bat Conservation Trust, deliver an annual report on the abundance of eight bat species
- By March 2004, publish the first overview report for the UK mammal surveillance programme (Tracking Mammals)
- Through an agreement with the Game Conservancy Trust, deliver an annual report on the abundance of mammals recorded by the National Game Bag Census
- In 2003/04, pilot additional scheme(s) to deal with species not covered by the general schemes being trialled (e.g. red squirrels and elusive mustelids)

#### **Seabird and cetacean surveillance**

- Report on seabird population trends on annual and 15-year cycles
- Produce annual seaduck monitoring reports
- By March 2004, enhance the web delivery of seabird data sets so that they can be searched by NBN
- By July 2003, publish Seabird 2000 book and Cetaceans Atlas

#### **Butterfly and moth surveillance**

- Produce annual indices on butterfly species covered by the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS), and deliver an annual report to recorders, containing an overview of each species, long-term trends, and any significant events and findings from the scheme during the past year
- In partnership with Butterfly Conservation, produce an annual summary report on the results of moth recording via the existing network
- Enhance the web delivery of surveillance results for butterflies so that they can be searched by NBN, and can be flexibly grouped by pressures, species associations and other parameters

#### **Plant surveillance**

- By March 2004, develop a single access point for threatened bryophyte data

#### **Biological Records Centre (BRC)**

- In partnership with BRC, support national species recording schemes; in particular, produce distribution atlases for:
  - in 2003/04 - Chrysomelidae (leaf-beetles) and Bruchidae (seed-beetles)
  - in 2004/05 - Aculeates (part), fleas, millipedes, woodlice and mayflies
  - in 2005/06 - Aculeates (part), water beetles, bryophytes (update) and larger Brachycera (flies)
- Ensure delivery of selected BRC datasets (including freshwater fish, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and several invertebrate groups) via the NBN Gateway

#### **Common standards monitoring for designated sites**

- Develop a system for monitoring habitat, species and earth heritage interest features on SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites, in close collaboration with the country agencies and other organisations; in particular:
  - by May 2003, ensure that guidance for monitoring habitat, species and earth heritage interest features on designated sites is made available to country agencies and other organisations through the JNCC website
  - by February 2004, produce an interim report summarising available site monitoring results for the UK, and in 2005, produce a full report on the first 6-year monitoring cycle
  - by December 2003, agree a comprehensive quality assurance programme for designated site monitoring, and begin to implement from 2004 onwards
  - by March 2004, review all monitoring guidance in light of use during the 2003 field season, paying

particular attention to marine habitats and problematic species groups such as lower plants and invertebrates; undertake further revision in 2004/05 and 2005/06, as required

### **Monitoring pollutant levels in birds**

- Produce an annual report summarising levels of pollutants in birds

### **UK wildlife statistics**

- By March 2004, complete a pilot study (using higher plant data) demonstrating how UK monitoring and surveillance information can be integrated to produce an overview of biodiversity status and trends and to update biodiversity indicators
- In 2004/05 and 2005/06, deliver additional integrated UK wildlife statistics based on data from monitoring and surveillance schemes for birds, butterflies and other species groups

### **Enhanced funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06**

With increased funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06, we would:

- Manage the mammal Winter Transect and Sign project, following renegotiation of the existing contract
- Increase the coverage of species, biotopes and geographical areas within the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, thereby raising the value of the survey for measuring trends in UK butterflies, their significance and possible causes
- Initiate a comprehensive surveillance programme for marine priority habitats
- Develop a basic surveillance module for vascular plants
- Develop pilot national surveillance programmes for dragonflies, fish and reptiles and amphibians
- Provide a European context for assessing the UK status of butterflies and/or vascular plants by forging closer links with European organisations and specialist networks to test collaborative sharing of data and information
- Devise a programme for monitoring SACs in UK offshore waters, and begin to implement monitoring on selected sites (depends on the content and timing of new Offshore Regulations)

### **Planned resources**

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Salaries		475	499 (499)	527 (574)
Direct expenditure		1,225	1,187 (1,490)	1,171 (1,622)
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,700</b>	<b>1,686 (1,989)</b>	<b>1,698 (2,197)</b>

## **Making nature conservation information accessible**

### **Introduction**

Technological developments are transforming the way in which organisations, including government bodies, manage and use information. Government is committed to using information technology to meet the needs of citizens and businesses, and has set out its information age agenda as part of the wider *Modernising Government* process. Priorities include delivering services and information through electronic media, facilitating partnership working between different parts of government, and improving government's access to, and organisation of, information.

JNCC is well-placed to contribute to these initiatives. Information underpins all of our work, and we have considerable expertise in collecting, collating, managing, disseminating and sharing environmental data. Our contribution to the development of systems and tools for handling biodiversity information, such as the Recorder software, the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), and various websites, is highly valued by our partners.

### **Drivers of JNCC's work**

The main drivers of our work are:

- Reporting obligations of MEAs, European directives and UK BAP
- *Modernising Government* agenda

### **Achievements in 2002/03**

[to be completed]

### **Overview of the next three years**

Our overall aims are:

- to provide a greater quantity and quality of biodiversity information to support decision-making processes undertaken by Government, country agencies and others;
- to provide information to measure progress towards biodiversity targets;
- to make UK biodiversity information available to all those that need it.

To meet these aims we will need to remain at the forefront of technological developments. Over the plan period we will use our technical expertise to maintain Recorder and enhance the NBN Gateway, and will continue to work with partner organisations to promote their use throughout the nature conservation community. We will also step up our efforts to improve the interface between UK information systems and European and global systems such as the Global Biodiversity Information Forum (GBIF) and the European Nature Information System (EUNIS).

Website development will also remain a high priority. We aim to improve the content and layout of the JNCC website on an ongoing basis so that the main customers for our information can rely on it as a primary reference source. Internally, we will make improvements to our intranet so that it can support more efficient working practices across the organisation, and, if sufficient funds are available, we will develop electronic records management systems in line with government targets.

Although the emphasis of our work will be on using electronic systems for disseminating information, we will continue to make information available through more traditional media and will maintain our reputation for producing high-quality paper reports and publications.

### **Targets for 2003-06 on minimum funding**

#### **National Biodiversity Network (NBN)**

- By March 2004, establish a performance specification for the NBN Gateway taking into account the likely volume of information growth and estimates of usage by JNCC priority audiences over the next three years,

- and provide costed options for meeting this
- Deliver improvements to the NBN Gateway so that it meets the needs of JNCC and partner organisations; in particular:
    - in 2003/04, enhance the Gateway so that new surveillance data can be added incrementally as they are processed and validated, and apply the enhancement so that four surveillance schemes, a BAP lead partner and a local records centre are supplying data in this way
    - in 2003/04, enhance the Gateway so that errors in data identified through use, or through organised validation by schemes, can be collected and passed back to the manager of the relevant data set
    - in 2004/05 develop efficient update mechanisms, and make any enhancements necessary to ensure that the Gateway delivers a robust and reliable service that users can depend on
  - Co-ordinate access to NBN standards of JNCC species and habitat information sources
  - Provide a targeted service aiding voluntary sector use of the NBN Gateway that leads to growth in content relevant to nature conservation (repayment work)
  - In 2005/06, automate the production of biodiversity status reports and national wildlife statistics from data available through the Gateway

### **Recorder**

- By March 2004, release an improved version of Recorder 2002 that provides the capacity for recording schemes, societies and local records centres to manage very high volumes of data
- Provide a second-line support service for Recorder users that efficiently fixes technical problems, makes small-scale enhancements to solve generic user efficiency problems, and disseminates user best practice
- During 2003/04, provide support to five local records centre and national recording scheme reference centres, helping them implement Recorder 2002, integrate it with their other software, and help them develop data management working practices that get the maximum benefit from the new facilities offered by Recorder 2002
- By March 2004, develop a mechanism for surveillance schemes to rapidly exchange, validate and update data sets accessible via the NBN network, making optimal use of the tools they currently use to capture data

### **Marine habitat information**

- By March 2004, complete the transfer of all Marine Nature Conservation Review (MNCR) data holdings into fully functional modern databases
- Ensure marine data held externally continue to add to national (JNCC and NBN) data holdings, particularly via country agency and MarLIN sources, and are accessible through web sites
- By March 2005, complete the development of Marine Recorder by developing analytical and reporting tools and a GIS interface
- Build a spatial component into JNCC's marine database holdings, including broadscale raster and vector data (bathymetry, seabed sediments and nautical charts)

### **European and global information systems**

- Improve the interface between UK-level biodiversity information systems such as NBN, and European and global information systems such as the Global Biodiversity Information Forum (GBIF) and European Nature Information System (EUNIS); in particular:
  - maximise the impact of UK expertise on GBIF standards so that collections and other biodiversity data can interoperate as part of GBIF and NBN
  - ensure that GBIF's design is flexible enough to use NBN effectively
  - ensure that the collections-based taxonomic biodiversity network initiatives and NBN consider how they relate and can fit together
  - develop a consensus on how biological conservation data sources fit within European-led initiatives to gain access to spatial data sources

### **Biodiversity reporting**

- Support Defra in contributing to the United Nations Environment Programme work on harmonisation of biodiversity reporting.

### **Records management**

- By December 2003, draw up a plan for managing JNCC's information assets and PRO-related records that integrates with our NBN and website development
- By March 2004, implement a unified system for managing contract information within JNCC

### Website development

- Revise the JNCC website so that it contains balanced coverage of UK-level conservation issues, and allows users to efficiently find information and advice
- By March 2004, review the usage, content, and benefits of the existing intranet, compare with improvements to electronic filing within JNCC's network, and decide on its future role

### Communications

- Produce three issues of *Nature News* each year
- By July each year, produce JNCC's annual report for the previous financial year
- Provide high-quality support to launches and issue timely press releases

### Enhanced funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06

With increased funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06, we would:

- Review whether the Recorder software is the best method for standardised collection of biodiversity data, and depending on results undertake priority enhancements
- Fully implement a content management system for the JNCC website (and other websites run by JNCC) that provides major gains for internal efficiency, and helps to meet PRO requirements
- Re-evaluate the options for electronic document and record management, and draw up an implementation plan to be initiated in 2005/06
- Undertake targeted development of the NBN Gateway to meet the needs of the country agencies
- Connect MarLIN and Marine Recorder to NBN and develop web-based summary reporting tools

### Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Salaries		493	519 (531)	550 (563)
Direct expenditure		153	127 (206)	117 (186)
<b>Total</b>		<b>646</b>	<b>646 (736)</b>	<b>666 (748)</b>

## **Supporting the JNCC's business by providing high-quality services**

### **Introduction**

The preceding sections of the corporate plan describe JNCC's nature conservation priorities and targets for the next three years. However, delivering this work programme will not be possible without effective and efficient support services, including finance, human resources, information technology, and business management. All of these services must be tailored to meet JNCC's business needs, and must also be responsive to the Government's agenda for public sector reform, including *Modernising Government* and other initiatives.

### **Drivers of JNCC's work**

The main drivers of our work are:

- The *Modernising Government* programme and other initiatives for public sector reform
- JNCC's FMPR
- Ongoing strategy development

### **Achievements in 2002/03**

[to be completed]

### **Overview of the next three years**

Our overall aims are:

- to achieve effective corporate governance and operating policies, ensuring that they reflect best practice in delivering public services;
- to ensure that financial and human resource management policies, practices and systems support the business needs of the JNCC and are implemented effectively;
- to provide effective, efficient and environmentally sound facilities and support services for the Peterborough, Aberdeen and Brussels offices;
- to provide an effective and reliable IT network, office tools, and internet link so that JNCC can create, manage and use information efficiently and share it with partners.

The period covered by this plan will see major changes to the way in which JNCC does its business. One of the principal drivers of change will be the implementation of the recommendations arising from the recent (FMPR) of the organisation. In April 2005 JNCC will be established as a company limited by guarantee, putting us in a position to employ our own staff and have greater control over our finances. The benefits of these changes are significant, but fundamental changes to many of our support functions will be required before the new organisation can be set up.

The changes associated with the FMPR will be complemented by ongoing work to undertake a fundamental review of JNCC's strategic direction. This work will build on the existing Statement of Strategic Direction, and will seek to identify top-level goals and priorities for the organisation, supported by operational strategies.

Set against the backdrop of FMPR implementation and strategy review it is essential that we keep the business running by continuing to provide high-quality support services. We are committed to a process of continuous improvement and modernisation, focusing on the needs of our customers in the country agencies, Government and elsewhere. For example, over the next year we will review our performance management systems, further embed risk management into the day-to-day business of the organisation, enhance our internet link, and adopt a more strategic approach to staff training and development. In the longer term and subject to available resources, we will assess the application of quality management schemes, such as the Business Excellence Model and Investors in People, within JNCC.

### **Targets for 2003-06 on minimum funding**

#### **Corporate governance**



- By September 2003, complete a comprehensive review of JNCC's strategic position, identify strategic goals and priorities, and begin to draw up operational strategies
- By December 2003, develop an action plan to improve JNCC's business management processes that reflects internal and external drivers of change, and begin to implement the plan within agreed timescales
- By December 2003, introduce a revised performance management system and trial its use within JNCC
- By March 2004 achieve a full Statement of Internal Control

### **Financial management**

- In consultation with English Nature, submit JNCC accounts each year and by agreed dates, and ensure that we receive a satisfactory audit outcome
- Ensure that 95% of all invoices are paid by the due date

### **Human resources management**

- Maintain permanent and FTA staff turnover at between 10% and 12% each year
- Develop and deliver an annual training programme to provide an average of 3 days training per person each year
- By March 2004, develop a training and development strategy to underpin JNCC's operational strategy
- Achieve 97% of maximum staffing level through an efficient and effective recruitment programme

### **Office facilities**

- By September 2003, produce a three-year environmental management action plan, and begin to implement it to agreed timescales
- Ensure that Peterborough and Aberdeen office running costs are maintained at 2002/03 levels by making appropriate efficiency savings
- By March 2004, reduce paper usage by 5%
- Meet all obligations relating to Health and Safety legislation

### **IT support**

- During 2003/04, migrate the current operating systems to a single network operating system, so to improve and reduce administrative overheads
- During 2003/04, increase capacity of the JNCC network so that it can meet document and data storage needs up to 2006 (assuming current content growth rates)
- During 2003/04, upgrade 25 desktop PCs that are over four years so as to enable staff to efficiently run standard JNCC software
- Provide software updates to implement the GIS strategy, to provide more efficient web development tools, and improve management of the JNCC network
- By March 2004, increase the capacity of JNCC's internet link so that all mobile and outposted staff (including Lead Co-ordination Network staff) can access e-mail on the JNCC network, and JNCC has the capacity to host web sites internally

### **Implementation of FMPR recommendations**

- By April 2005, implement the recommendations arising from JNCC's FMPR by establishing JNCC as a company limited by guarantee, following use of a Regulatory Reform Order to amend the Environmental Protection Act; in preparation for this:
  - by April 2004, work with Defra to progress to the scrutiny stage a Regulatory Reform Order
  - by April 2004, prepare draft governance documents for the new organisation (including a financial memorandum, management statement, and memorandum and articles of association), and complete by October 2004
  - by October 2004, set up the necessary finance, HR and IT infrastructure
  - negotiate a single set of terms and conditions for JNCC staff and manage the transfer of staff to the new organisation

### **Enhanced funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06**

With increased funding for 2004/05 and 2005/06, we would:

- Consider the application within JNCC of one or more quality management schemes, such as the Business Excellence Model or Investors in People
- Provide increased training and development opportunities for JNCC staff
- Improve JNCC's IT system by:
  - undertaking a capital replacement programme
  - upgrading the telephone system
  - providing improved facilities for remote working to outposted staff (including Lead Co-ordination Network officers)

**Planned resources**

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Salaries		851	903 (903)	963 (963)
Direct expenditure		850	855 (954)	831 (956)
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,702</b>	<b>1,758 (1,858)</b>	<b>1,794 (1,920)</b>

## Funding summary

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Salaries		2,765	2,714 (3,353)	3,175 (3,260)
Direct expenditure		2,850	2,991 (3,027)	2,623 (3,419)
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,615</b>	<b>5,705 (6,380)</b>	<b>5,798 (6,679)</b>

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2002/03 (out-turn)	2003/04	2004/05 minimum (required)	2005/06 minimum (required)
Providing advice on international conservation issues		239	240 (258)	240 (260)
Furthering nature conservation in a European context		513	528 (587)	540 (595)
Providing scientific advice on the sustainable use of resources		456	553 (603)	572 (617)
Developing common standards for nature conservation and co-ordinating UK approaches		359	295 (349)	287 (343)
Assessing the status of UK biodiversity and earth heritage		1,700	1,686 (1,989)	1,696 (2,197)
Making nature conservation information accessible		646	646 (736)	666 (748)
Supporting the JNCC's business by providing high-quality services		1,702	1,758 (1,858)	1,794 (1,920)
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,615</b>	<b>5,705 (6,380)</b>	<b>5,798 (6,679)</b>