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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

JNCC BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2004/05

Paper by Marcus Yeo and Lynsey Bigger

1. Background

- 1.1 The Joint Committee considered a draft business plan for 2004/05 at their December 2003 meeting. At this stage, the JNCC's grant in aid for 2004/05 was not known, and so the business plan was based on a flat baseline, with costed options for undertaking additional work if enhanced grant in aid was made available. Committee advised on priorities within the proposed work programmes.
- 1.2 Following discussions between Defra and devolved administrations, the JNCC's grant in aid settlement for 2004/05 has now been agreed. The business plan has been amended in line with available funding, taking into account views on priorities expressed by Committee and Government.

2. Funding for 2004/05

- 2.1 Defra and devolved administrations have agreed grant in aid of £5,803k for the JNCC in 2004/05. In addition, funds to cover Accruing Superannuation Liability Charges (ASLCs) for staff assigned to the JNCC will be included within the grant in aid, as responsibility for these costs has now passed from the country agencies to the JNCC. Based on 2003/04 figures, ASLCs for 2004/05 are estimated to be £358k¹, and the JNCC's total grant in aid will therefore be £6,161k. Annex A contains a breakdown of the grant in aid figures, including a comparison with 2003/04.
- 2.2 In addition to grant in aid, anticipated income from other sources in 2004/05 is currently estimated to be £442k². The total available funding is therefore approximately £6,604k.
- 2.3 These figures represent an increase in grant in aid of £281k (4.8%) compared to 2003/04. Salary increases (pay progression and cost of living) account for much of the £281k, leaving relatively little additional money for programmes.

¹ This figure will be checked against projected salary spend in 2004/05 and confirmed with the country agencies before the budget is finalised.

² This does not include all income associated with the Interreg-funded Mapping European Seabed Habitats (MESH) project.

- 2.4 Constraints on programme budgets (which are unlikely to ease in the foreseeable future) underline the need to maintain close control on running costs and to make efficiency savings where possible (see Annex B).

3. Work programme for 2004/05

- 3.1 The proposed work programme for 2004/05 is described in the draft business plan (attached at Annex C).
- 3.2 Following the decision on the JNCC's grant in aid, project targets and budgets have been reassessed. Most of the additional funding has been allocated to marine work, in particular to support implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives and the OSPAR Convention. This is seen as a high priority by both Government and country agencies. Modest budgetary increases have also been agreed for some other projects, including climate change, ecosystem management and European intelligence.
- 3.3 As well as any adjustments required by Committee, the business plan still requires some final editing (e.g. the addition of a foreword and out-turns for 2003/04). It is intended to distribute the plan (by hard copy and via the JNCC website) in April.

Annex A. Breakdown of grant in aid figures for 2003/04 and 2004/05

	2003/04 (£k)	2004/05 (£k)
Grant in aid (excluding ASLCs) ¹	5,536	5,803
<i>English Nature contribution</i>	<i>3,043</i>	<i>3,193</i>
<i>SNH contribution</i>	<i>1,522</i>	<i>1,597</i>
<i>CCW contribution</i>	<i>761</i>	<i>798</i>
<i>EHS contribution</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>215</i>
Accruing Superannuation Liability Charges (ASLCs) ²	345	358
<i>English Nature contribution</i>	<i>166</i>	<i>173</i>
<i>SNH contribution</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>134</i>
<i>CCW contribution</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>51</i>
Total grant in aid ³	5,880	6,161

Notes

¹ Country agency contributions to the JNCC's grant in aid (excluding ASLCs) have been calculated using the agreed funding formula (i.e. England, Scotland and Wales contribute in a 4:2:1 ratio).

² ASLC contributions are based on the salaries of staff assigned to each country agency, and do not follow the 4:2:1 ratio. Contributions for 2004/05 have been estimated by adding 4% to 2003/04 figures. These estimates will be checked against projected salary spend in 2004/05 and confirmed with the country agencies before the budget is finalised

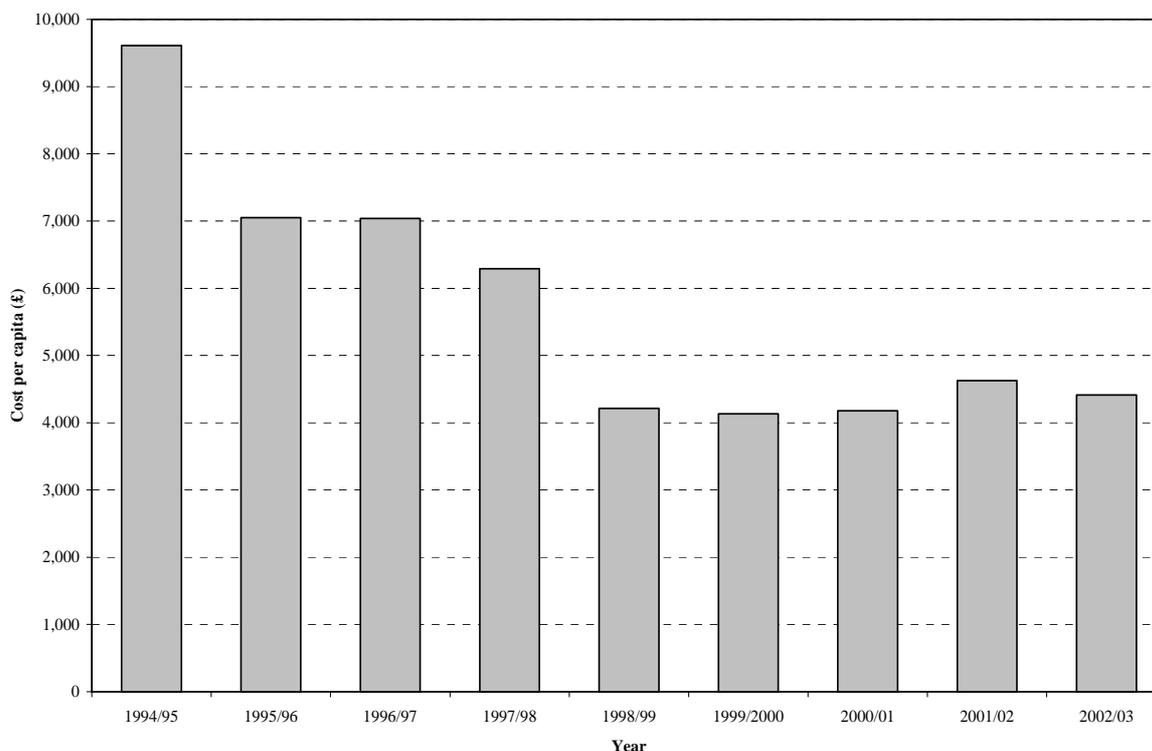
³ The total grant in aid figure for 2003/04 excludes £251k that Defra made available to the JNCC in January 2004 following reallocation of funds within the department.

Annex B. Efficiency savings in the JNCC

Note by Francis Mitchell, Lynsey Bigger, Angela Melachrino and Marcus Yeo

1. The JNCC has always endeavoured to operate its business as efficiently as possible, and to maintain running costs at an acceptable level. This ensures that available resources are directed as far as possible to delivery of the special functions. Consideration of the issue is particularly timely, in view of likely budgetary constraints over the next few years and the ongoing cross-Government efficiency review (led by Peter Gershon) which aims to free up resources for frontline public services through radical changes to the way in which support services are undertaken. The Gershon review will influence budgetary decisions made in the 2004 Spending Review.
2. The attached graph shows the pattern of spend on running costs within the JNCC since 1994/95.

JNCC running costs per capita, 1994-2003



3. Running cost savings of £30k have been made during 2003/04, and additional savings of £30k (out of a total budget of approximately £800k) are anticipated for 2004/05. Because of changes in working practices, savings of £20-30k within the salaries budget are also forecast for 2004/05. These savings will be reallocated to priority work areas.
4. Key features of the JNCC's approach to efficiency savings are described below.
 - i. Because of the JNCC's remit, many staff have to liaise frequently with colleagues across the UK and internationally, and participate in meetings in

widely dispersed locations. A prudent approach to travel (e.g. a presumption against first class travel) has helped to keep costs to a reasonable level. Use of video-conferencing enables regular contact with other organisations and between the Peterborough, Aberdeen and Brussels offices to be maintained at low cost.

- ii. Investment in IT has been a major factor in driving down running costs. For example, efficiency savings have been, or will be, generated by increasing use of the website as a major information delivery channel for all the JNCC's customers (underpinned by implementation of a website content management system), purchase of improved reprographics equipment, and upgrading to a single network operating system.
 - iii. Office rent and rates inevitably form a substantial proportion of the JNCC's running costs. Opportunities to reduce these costs are limited, but rationalisation of warehouse requirements from 2004/05 will deliver significant savings.
 - iv. Significant economies have also been generated by reassessing the way in which office facilities are provided. In several cases, efficiency savings have been combined with improvements in environmental management, e.g. by switching to a low-cost, 'green' electricity supplier.
5. The JNCC is already a lean organisation, and many of the cost savings available in comparable organisations have already been made. Further efficiency savings (in addition to those detailed above) may be of marginal benefit. 'Spend to save' initiatives are likely to offer the best opportunities for long-term savings. For example, implementation of an electronic document management system would deliver significant efficiency gains, as well as enabling the JNCC to meet e-Government targets, but would require an initial investment.
6. Implementation of the FMPR recommendations will involve the purchase of new IT systems in 2004/05 and subsequent recurring costs of approximately £60k per annum (covering system maintenance, internal and external audit, payroll provision and pension administration). However, these recurring costs will either result in savings within the country agencies (who currently provide certain services for the JNCC) or will be offset by efficiency savings elsewhere in the JNCC. There will therefore be no long-term net increase in costs across the JNCC and country agencies as a whole.

Annex C. JNCC business plan for 2004/05

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Foreword

1. Introduction

This business plan sets out the contribution that the JNCC will make to nature conservation in the UK and internationally during 2004/05. It is based on the corporate plan for 2003-06, which set out a three-year work programme for the JNCC. Targets and budgets for 2004/05 have been rolled forward from the corporate plan, and amended where necessary, in line with current priorities and funding levels.

1.1. Funding

The plan is based on grant in aid for 2004/05 of £6.161 million. This includes costs associated with Accruing Superannuation Liability Charges (ASLCs) for staff assigned to the JNCC, which from 2004/05 onwards will be met from the JNCC's grant in aid.

Table 1. Total JNCC funding for 2003/04 and 2004/05

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Grant in aid (including ASLC contributions)	5,880	6,161
Other income ¹	553	443
Total	6433	6,604

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 in sections 2-8 of the plan. Each section includes a summary of achievements in 2003/04, targets for 2004/05, and a summary of planned resources. Wherever possible, targets are presented as outputs rather than inputs or actions, but this is problematic for some areas of the JNCC's work. In particular, our advisory work is often reactive and difficult to quantify.

1.2. Drivers of the JNCC's work

The overall thrust of our work programme for 2004/05 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 ensured that we are making an appropriate contribution to Government's environmental objectives by linking our work to UK departments' Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets, 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.

1.3. Strategic direction

The JNCC's Statement of Strategic Direction summarises our current position and includes elements of a forward look. However, the Joint Committee has acknowledged that further strategic thinking is needed to shape

¹ Income for 2004/05 may increase if additional project funding is secured

the organisation's long-term direction and to set clear high-level priorities and objectives. Preparation of a mission and strategic objectives for the JNCC, supported by a vision for our natural heritage, began in 2003, and will be completed in 2004. The revised strategic objectives currently being developed by the Joint Committee will be reflected in the JNCC's corporate planning from 2005/06 onwards.

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 thinking. We have taken account of the following opportunities for enhancing our contribution to nature conservation in the UK and internationally:

- increased emphasis in UK Government and 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 the JNCC's services, particularly for advice on international issues and on nature conservation in the offshore marine environment;
- the Government's agenda for reform of the public sector, 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 recommendations arising from the recent Financial, Management and Policy Review (FMPR) of the JNCC.

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;
- the ability to look outwards (to Europe and beyond) and assess the implications for UK nature conservation.

1.4. Key targets for 2004/05

Our work programme for 2004/05 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, 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 2004/05. Assessment of organisational performance over the next year will depend to a large degree on our success in achieving these goals.

The 20 key targets for 2004/05 are summarised below.

Providing advice on international nature conservation issues

- Provide scientific advice to Defra, devolved administrations and country agencies on the implementation of the CBD; in particular:
 - advise Defra and devolved administrations on the development of a UK strategy for CBD implementation (*JNCC role to be defined following the Conference of Parties in February 2004*)
 - provide technical support to Defra at meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and EU negotiations
- 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 13th Conference of Parties in October 2004, and lead for the UK at meetings of the CITES Animals Committee and European Commission Scientific Review Group
- Provide the OSPAR lead on marine habitat classification and mapping, and by February 2005 complete a programme to map 14 priority habitats across the OSPAR area
- 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

Furthering nature conservation in a European context

- By providing high-quality technical advice, seek to influence the relevant thematic strategies of the 6th Environmental Action Programme, the EC Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, and where possible the debate on the new constitution for Europe, so that collectively they deliver nature conservation gains in the UK and across Europe
- Support full implementation of the Habitats Directive in the marine environment and especially beyond 12 nautical miles; in particular:
 - submit to Defra up to five pSACs in UK offshore waters for Annex I habitats, using existing information
 - obtain robust scientific data to underpin the selection of offshore habitat SACs by undertaking collaborative broadscale surveys of possible sites
 - identify, if possible using existing data, SACs in UK waters away from the coast for Annex II species;
 - start to develop conservation objectives and management plans for possible Annex I habitat SACs
- Support full implementation of the Birds Directive in the marine environment and especially beyond 12 nautical miles; in particular:
 - collect and analyse data for the identification of SPAs for inshore non-breeding birds
 - refine and review generic guidance on the identification of, and boundary definition for, SPAs for inshore non-breeding birds
 - refine and review generic guidance on seaward extensions to seabird breeding colony SPAs
 - develop methods for the identification of SPAs for aggregations of seabirds away from the coast

Providing scientific advice on the sustainable use of natural resources

- Provide advice to DTI, devolved administrations and others on about 40 Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), 400 EIA dispensations, 40 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 the 5th Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of offshore energy to be carried out prior to oil and gas licensing and further renewables licensing
- Provide advice to mitigate the damaging environmental impacts of air pollution; in particular:
 - ensure that air pollution policies take nature conservation interests fully into account by providing technical advice to Government
 - ensure that vulnerable habitats and species within statutory sites are protected from air pollution by developing and promoting guidance on air pollution assessment under the Habitats Directive and the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive, in consultation with Government, statutory agencies, power generators and others
- Promote the application of ecosystem management approaches in the UK through discussion with the country agencies, Government and others, and prepare best-practice guidance

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

- In partnership with Defra, promote and enable biodiversity research that supports the delivery of UK BAP objectives; in particular:
 - by September 2004, convene the third full meeting of the UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group (BRAG); complete fully developed research programmes on socio-economic issues, monitoring, and management; and establish an updated web-based catalogue of research and research needs
 - by December 2004, convene the fourth full BRAG meeting
 - by March 2005, complete a fully developed research programme for a fourth cross-cutting theme

Assessing the status of UK biodiversity and earth heritage

- With partner organisations, develop a framework and standards for the surveillance and monitoring of terrestrial, freshwater and coastal Annex I and BAP priority habitats
- Establish an EU Interreg-funded project to develop a framework for Mapping European Seabed Habitats (MESH) and deliver the first year's work programme; in particular:
 - compile maps of seabed habitats within UK waters and associated geophysical and hydrographic datasets into a GIS, focusing on Habitats Directive, OSPAR and BAP priority habitats
 - develop tools to match habitat data to common classification systems
- Publish the first overview report for the UK mammal surveillance programme (*Tracking Mammals*)
- Develop a system for monitoring habitat, species and earth heritage interest features on A/SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites, in close collaboration with the country agencies and other organisations; in particular:
 - produce a third interim report on work to date within the first 6-year monitoring cycle

- complete guidance chapters for monitoring marine mammals, invertebrates, lower plants, lowland wetlands, and freshwater features, and integrate and disseminate completed guidance
- implement a comprehensive quality assurance programme for designated site monitoring

Making nature conservation information accessible

- Deliver improvements to the NBN Gateway so that it meets the needs of the JNCC and partner organisations; in particular:
 - develop efficient update mechanisms
 - extend the functionality of the Gateway to include habitat data, and to allow it to hold and report on additional attributes
 - make any enhancements necessary to ensure that the Gateway delivers a robust and reliable service for users
- By December 2004, deliver the JNCC website via a content management system so that it contains balanced coverage of UK-level conservation issues, improves the ease with which detailed information and advice can be found, and is ready for rapid adoption of new branding and information to support strategy and FMPR changes

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

- By December 2004, make the necessary changes to management structures and systems to facilitate implementation of the JNCC's strategy, and develop stakeholders' understanding of the strategy
- By April 2005, implement the recommendations arising from the JNCC's FMPR; in particular:
 - negotiate a single set of terms and conditions for JNCC staff and manage the transfer of staff to the new organisation
 - work with Defra to progress through to completion a Regulatory Reform Order to amend the Environmental Protection Act
 - complete preparation for establishing a company limited by guarantee and put in place appropriate corporate governance arrangements
 - put in place the necessary finance and HR infrastructure for the new organisation

2. Providing advice on international nature conservation issues

2.1. 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 preparation and implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and promoted the concept of sustainable development. The Convention continues to drive conservation action globally, for example through the adoption of a challenging target to significantly reduce the current rate of global biodiversity loss by 2010.

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 global environmental issues, especially in the context of sustainable development in developing countries.

2.2. Drivers of the 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 or Memoranda of Understanding
 - 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

2.3. Achievements in 2003/04

Key achievements during 2003/04 included:

To be completed

2.4. Overview of 2004/05

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.

Over the next year, we will continue to provide scientific support to Government to enable the effective implementation of MEAs. We will participate in UK delegations attending key international meetings (in particular, the 13th CITES Conference of the Parties and technical meetings to support implementation of CBD and Ramsar), 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 preparing reports, developing UK strategies and action plans, and providing specialist services. The importance of international initiatives in the marine environment has led us to put increased effort into supporting implementation of

the OSPAR Convention, e.g. by leading a mapping programme across the north-east Atlantic and beginning the process of identifying Marine Protected Areas within UK waters.

The JNCC's potential role in contributing to nature conservation beyond the UK forms a significant strand of our developing strategy. In recognition of this, work in the UK's Overseas Territories will be a high priority during 2004/05, and we will provide support to FCO and Overseas Territory governments to help implement MEAs and to develop other conservation initiatives.

2.5. Targets for 2004/05

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- **Key target:** Provide scientific advice to Defra, devolved administrations and country agencies on the implementation of the CBD; in particular:
 - advise Defra and devolved administrations on the development of a UK strategy for CBD implementation (*JNCC role to be defined following the Conference of Parties in February 2004*)
 - provide technical support to Defra at meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and EU negotiations
- 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
- Contribute to the preparation of reports by Defra on the UK's implementation of the CBD (*precise requirements still to be decided*)

Bonn Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

- Provide scientific advice to Defra, devolved administrations and country agencies on the implementation of CMS and seven daughter agreements or Memoranda of Understanding:
 - 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)
 - Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan Concerning Conservation Measures for the Aquatic Warbler
- Contribute to the preparation of a report by Defra on the UK's implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species by March 2005
- With partner organisations in the UK and The Netherlands, promote the worldwide conservation of migratory waterbirds by organising the Global Flyways Conference in April 2004

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

- **Key target:** 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 13th Conference of Parties in October 2004, and lead for the UK at meetings of the CITES Animals Committee and European Commission Scientific Review Group
- 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

- Facilitate the implementation of the Ramsar Convention globally and in the UK; in particular:
 - work with Government, statutory agencies and voluntary bodies to deliver the UK Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008
 - provide technical support to Defra in preparation for the 9th Conference of Parties in late 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 UK network of Ramsar sites, and identify significant gaps in coverage

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
- Promote UK approaches to earth heritage conservation and facilitate dialogue with other countries by holding a major international conference in Dorset in September 2004
- Collaborate with the International Union of Geological Sciences to develop new European and global earth heritage initiatives

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

- **Key target:** Provide the OSPAR lead on marine habitat classification and mapping, and by February 2005 complete a programme to map 14 priority habitats across the OSPAR area
- Provide scientific advice to the OSPAR Biodiversity Committee and Defra on programmes and measures for threatened species and habitats, and lead work on *Lophelia* reef across the OSPAR area
- Provide scientific advice to the OSPAR Biodiversity Committee and Defra on Ecological Quality Objectives, focusing on those that are sponsored by the UK (seals, kittiwakes and guillemots)
- Define principles for the identification of an ecologically coherent network of OSPAR Marine Protected Areas within UK waters

UK Overseas Territories

- **Key target:** 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

Conservation of Arctic Flora and 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 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

Global footprint

- Complete a review of available literature, tools and techniques relating to the impact of UK activities on the global environment, and analyse opportunities within Government where advice might add significant value

2.6. Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Grant in aid		341
Other income		116
Total		457

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Salaries		229
Direct expenditure		228
Total		457

3. Furthering nature conservation in a European context

3.1. 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 beginning to contribute to 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 6th 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 section 4 of this plan).

3.2. Drivers of the JNCC's work

The main drivers of our work are:

- EU Directives:
 - Habitats Directive
 - Birds Directive
 - Water Framework Directive
- European strategies and programmes:
 - 6th 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

3.3. Achievements in 2003/04

Key achievements during 2003/04 included:

To be completed

3.4. Overview of 2004/05

Our overall aims are:

- to maximise nature conservation gain by influencing EU nature conservation policy, legislation and practice, 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 developments such as the accession of 10 new EU Member States in 2004. 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 initiatives, and advising on implementation and best practice within the UK. The JNCC has an important part to play in this process. During 2004/05, we will continue to provide high-quality advice and intelligence, 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 6th Environmental Action Programme and other major cross-cutting initiatives.

Within the UK, implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives will remain a high priority, especially in the marine environment, where selection of SACs and SPAs is still far from complete. During the coming year, we will continue to co-ordinate this work, liaising with European partners as appropriate, and will advise Government on the identification of an appropriate network of sites.

The Water Framework Directive offers considerable opportunities for enhancing biodiversity, and 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.

3.5. Targets for 2004/05

Bern Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

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

EU and wider European nature conservation policies

- **Key target:** By providing high-quality technical advice, seek to influence the relevant thematic strategies of the 6th Environmental Action Programme, the EC Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, and where possible the debate on the new constitution for Europe, so that collectively they deliver nature conservation gains in the UK and across Europe
- Provide a high-quality enquiry and intelligence service for the 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, advise on interpretation and application of Article 1 (favourable conservation status), Article 6 (management plans), Article 10 (wider conservation measures) and Article 11 (surveillance)

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 on 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)

Marine Natura 2000

- **Key target:** Support full implementation of the Habitats Directive in the marine environment and especially beyond 12 nautical miles; in particular:
 - submit to Defra up to five pSACs in UK offshore waters for Annex I habitats, using existing information
 - obtain robust scientific data to underpin the selection of offshore habitat SACs by undertaking collaborative broadscale surveys of possible sites
 - identify, if possible using existing data, SACs in UK waters away from the coast for Annex II species;
 - start to develop conservation objectives and management plans for possible Annex I habitat SACs
- **Key target:** Support full implementation of the Birds Directive in the marine environment and especially beyond 12 nautical miles; in particular:
 - collect and analyse data for the identification of SPAs for inshore non-breeding birds
 - refine and review generic guidance on the identification of, and boundary definition for, SPAs for inshore non-breeding birds
 - refine and review generic guidance on seaward extensions to seabird breeding colony SPAs
 - develop methods for the identification of SPAs for aggregations of seabirds away from the coast

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 and the characterisation of water bodies

3.6. Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Grant in aid		616
Other income		70
Total		686

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Salaries		366
Direct expenditure		320
Total		686

4. Providing scientific advice on the sustainable use of natural resources

4.1. 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.

4.2. Drivers of the 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)
 - 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 [in England] (Defra PSA target)
 - ... secure CAP reforms that reduce production-linked support, enabling enhanced EU funding for environmental conservation and rural development (Defra PSA target, and also similar FCO target)
- Scottish Executive targets for 2003-06:
 - Bring in excess of 1,000 SSSIs into positive management by 2006
 - Minimise emissions of nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide
- Welsh Assembly Government targets:
 - By 2010, ensure the number of days below national air quality standards falls sharply
 - By 2010, ensure the quality of drinking, river and bathing water meets EU standards
 - By 2010, the populations of wild birds that are now in decline must have stabilised or started to rise
 - By 2010, work with the UK Government to ensure that CAP reform takes into account the needs of Welsh farming and rural communities
- 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
 - To improve air quality by progressing towards the UK Air Quality Strategy targets for carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, particles, sulphur dioxide, benzene and 1-3 butadiene

4.3. Achievements in 2003/04

Key achievements during 2003/04 included:

To be completed

4.4. Overview of 2004/05

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. Ensuring that nature conservation policies and practices contain measures to mitigate, or adapt to, the impacts of climate change will be a particular challenge. Influencing resource use policies is a huge undertaking, and we can only hope to achieve our aims by working closely with the country agencies and others, utilising 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 will fill 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 in 2004/05. 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 policies, 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 will assess how ecosystem management approaches could be applied in the UK, both in the terrestrial and marine environments, by drawing on international examples of best practice, and by working closely with the country agencies and others to develop practical approaches in the UK.

4.5. Targets for 2004/05

Land use policy

- Promote environmentally beneficial reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 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 (GMOs) in the UK take full account of the potential impacts 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 implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy by providing high-quality advice and information on fishery issues to Government, Parliament, country agencies and other relevant institutions

Offshore industries

- **Key target:** Provide advice to DTI, devolved administrations and others on about 40 Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), 400 EIA dispensations, 40 oil spill contingency plans, 30 dumping licences, 120 seismic applications and 30 miscellaneous items within timescales established in negotiation with customers

- **Key target:** Provide advice to DTI to enable the 5th Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of offshore energy to be carried out prior to oil and gas licensing and further renewables licensing
- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government, country agencies and others on a) introduced marine species, b) renewable energy sources, c) offshore oil spills, d) shipping issues, including further development of the clean ship concept, e) noise and marine mammals, and f) gravel extraction applications

Air pollution

- **Key target:** Provide advice to mitigate the damaging environmental impacts of air pollution; in particular:
 - ensure that air pollution policies take nature conservation interests fully into account by providing technical advice to Government
 - ensure that vulnerable habitats and species within statutory sites are protected from air pollution by developing and promoting guidance on air pollution assessment under the Habitats Directive and the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive, in consultation with Government, statutory agencies, power generators and others
- Evaluate the development of biomonitoring tools for assessing the effects of atmospheric nitrogen, and encourage their use for assessing the effects of nitrogen on protected sites
- Develop a framework to allow the country agencies to adopt an integrated approach to air pollution casework, and provide specialist support on complex and controversial cases

Climate change

- 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:
 - assess climate change effects on landscapes and ecosystems in Britain and Ireland by contributing to the multi-partner MONARCH project (Modelling Natural Resource Responses to Climate Change), completing in 2005/06
 - interpret and promote the findings of projects to assess the implications of climate change on biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, and to predict the effects of climate change on marine biodiversity in Britain and Ireland
- Develop advice on the implications of climate change for nature conservation policy and practice at UK, European and global scales (building on the outputs from MONARCH and other research projects)

Pesticides and toxic chemicals

- 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
- Ensure that advice on the impact of pesticides on invertebrates is underpinned by robust science by commissioning appropriate research

Integrated approaches to marine nature conservation

- Provide technical advice to Defra on initiatives arising out of the Marine Stewardship process; in particular:
 - provide advice to Defra following public consultation on the recommendations arising from the Review of Marine Nature Conservation in 2004
 - identify a series of marine features (species, habitats and marine landscapes) that are considered to be nationally important
- Provide high-quality, timely advice on the development and implementation of the marine thematic strategy within the 6th Environmental Action Programme
- Provide advice on the UK's contribution to international marine conservation initiatives, and in particular on the conservation of High Seas biodiversity

Ecosystem management

- **Key target:** Promote the application of ecosystem management approaches in the UK through discussion with the country agencies, Government and others, and prepare best-practice guidance
- Assess links between the CBD ecosystem approach and other legislative programmes, including Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, and river basin management plans under the Water Framework Directive

Soil conservation

- Provide high-quality, timely advice to Government on the development of national soil strategies, the 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 within the 6th Environmental Action Programme and in the preparation of a Soil Monitoring Directive
- Undertake the second year of a three-year project to investigate 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

4.6. Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Grant in aid		586
Other income		22
Total		608

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Salaries		452
Direct expenditure		156
Total		608

5. Developing common standards for nature conservation and co-ordinating UK approaches

5.1. Introduction

This strategic theme relates directly to the JNCC's statutory responsibilities as set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It recognises the contribution that the JNCC makes to nature conservation by developing and maintaining 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 the 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 (section 3), for monitoring interest features on protected sites (section 6), and for the collection and storage of data (section 7).

5.2. Drivers of the JNCC's work

The main drivers of our work are:

- UK Biodiversity Action Plan
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Government's headline indicators of sustainable development

5.3. Achievements in 2003/04

Key achievements during 2003/04 included:

To be completed

5.4. Overview of 2004/05

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.

The JNCC has played a prominent part in the development and implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) by supporting the work of country biodiversity groups and Habitat and Species Action Plan steering groups. Over the coming year we will continue to provide information and advice to meet the needs of the various biodiversity groups, and will co-ordinate preparations for the reporting round in 2005. 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.

The 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 on important nature conservation issues, 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. A priority for 2004/05 will be to advise Defra as it decides how to tackle issues relating to non-native species. 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 or wider international context.

In 2005, publication of the 42-volume Geological Conservation Review (GCR) will be completed, bringing to an end a 28-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.

5.5. Targets for 2004/05

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)

- Assist the delivery of UK BAP targets by co-ordinating aspects of Habitat Action Plan (HAP) and Species Action Plan (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
- Through the UK BAP website, deliver UK information to support BAP implementation by country biodiversity groups and Habitat and Species Action Plan steering groups
- By July 2004, publish an interpretation manual for BAP broad and priority habitats
- Develop procedures for gathering information required for the 2005 reporting round, and agree them with key partners

Biodiversity research

- **Key target:** In partnership with Defra, promote and enable biodiversity research that supports the delivery of UK BAP objectives; in particular:
 - by September 2004, convene the third full meeting of the UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group (BRAG); complete fully developed research programmes on socio-economic issues, monitoring, and management; and establish an updated web-based catalogue of research and research needs
 - by December 2004, convene the fourth full BRAG meeting
 - by March 2005, complete a fully developed research programme for a fourth cross-cutting theme

Biodiversity indicators

- Test and develop UK biodiversity indicators in light of the national guidance and global framework agreed by the CBD Conference of Parties in February 2004
- Ensure that European biodiversity indicators being developed by the European Environment Agency, for the EC Biodiversity Action Plans, and at a Pan-European level are as compatible as possible with the global framework agreed at the CBD Conference of Parties in February 2004 and that they help to measure progress towards the 2010 target to significantly reduce the rate of global biodiversity loss

Species status assessment

- Produce Red Lists for seaweeds, spiders, hoverflies and caddis flies and disseminate through the JNCC website and as publications

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
- Work with Defra and the country agencies on the follow-up to, and implementation of, Defra's review of non-native species policy
- By July 2004, complete a review of birds listed on Schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and provide advice to Government
- Provide specialist advice and information to Government, country agencies and others on UK and European habitat and species conservation issues

Common standards for the selection of SSSIs

- Publish revised SSSI selection guidelines for intertidal and lagoon habitats

Geological Conservation Review (GCR)

- Publish six further volumes of the GCR series
- Convert an additional five GCR volumes to a searchable electronic format
- Complete a review of site coverage in 10 GCR blocks

Habitat classifications

- Maintain an overview of habitat and vegetation classifications in the UK and Europe, and develop processes to integrate UK classifications within a European context
- Maintain and promote common standards in the use of the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) and the Phase I habitat classification

5.6. Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Grant in aid		365
Other income		67
Total		432

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Salaries		266
Direct expenditure		166
Total		432

6. Assessing the status of UK biodiversity and earth heritage

6.1. Introduction

Information on the status of the UK's biodiversity and earth heritage resource underpins much of the advisory work undertaken by the 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, for informing the development of resource use policies, and for meeting the reporting requirements of EU directives and international environmental agreements.

The 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).

6.2. Drivers of the JNCC's work

The main drivers of our work are:

- Surveillance and reporting obligations of MEAs, European directives and the 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 [in England]
 - 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 targets for 2003-06
 - Maintain 6-year cycle of monitoring condition of 3,800 features of natural heritage interest across 1,450 SSSIs
 - Increase the level of water environment monitoring by 15% to help evaluate the standard of [Scottish] rivers and lochs
- Assessing progress against Welsh Assembly Government targets:
 - By 2010, ensure the quality of drinking, river and bathing water meets EU standards
 - By 2010, the populations of wild birds that are now in decline must have stabilised or started to rise
- Assessing progress against the 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

6.3. Achievements in 2003/04

Key achievements during 2003/04 included:

To be completed

6.4. Overview of 2004/05

Our overall aims are:

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

During 2004/05, we will 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 the JNCC, the country agencies and others, and it is essential that their long-term future is secure. Our goal is 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. Meeting this objective will require better information on habitat status, and over the coming year we will take the first steps towards establishing habitat surveillance programmes for both the marine and terrestrial environments.

Implementation of the common standards monitoring programme for protected sites will continue to be a high priority for the country agencies over the coming year, driven by targets set by Defra and the devolved administrations. The JNCC will have a key role in ensuring that common standards are maintained by integrating and disseminating guidance for monitoring interest features, implementing a quality assurance programme, and collating data to produce an integrated UK picture of the status of features on protected sites.

Increasingly, we will seek to add value to our work by undertaking targeted analyses of monitoring and surveillance information. We will trial techniques to integrate data from different sources to create wildlife statistics that provide an overview of the current status of UK biodiversity and that meet the needs of policy-makers.

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 (NBN).

6.5. Targets for 2004/05

Habitat surveillance

- **Key target:** With partner organisations, develop a framework and standards for the surveillance and monitoring of terrestrial, freshwater and coastal Annex I and BAP priority habitats
- 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

- Working with key partners, begin to implement a programme for the surveillance of marine priority habitats, with the aim of meeting UK and international reporting requirements

Seabed habitat mapping

- **Key target:** Establish an EU Interreg-funded project to develop a framework for Mapping European Seabed Habitats (MESH) and deliver the first year's work programme; in particular:
 - compile maps of seabed habitats within UK waters and associated geophysical and hydrographic datasets into a GIS, focusing on Habitats Directive, OSPAR and BAP priority habitats
 - develop tools to match habitat data to common classification systems

State of the Seas report

- Advise Defra on marine biodiversity aspects of the State of the Seas report (due to be published in December 2004)

Bird surveillance

- In partnership with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, produce annual reports on the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)
- In partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology, produce outputs from survey work and research programmes, including the Breeding Bird Survey, national ringing programme, WeBS low tide counts, data on bird survival and movement, alerts and population assessments, data on breeding performance and productivity, special surveys and environmental change prediction
- In partnership with the Rare Breeding Birds Panel produce an annual report on rare breeding birds

Mammal surveillance

- **Key target:** Publish the first overview report for the UK mammal surveillance programme (*Tracking Mammals*)
- In partnership with the Bat Conservation Trust, deliver an annual report on the abundance of eight bat species
- Through an agreement with the Game Conservancy Trust, deliver an annual report on the abundance of mammals recorded by the National Game Bag Census

- Pilot additional schemes to deal with species not covered by the general mammal surveillance 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 report

Butterfly and moth surveillance

- Produce annual indices on butterfly species covered by the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, 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 through the NBN, and can be flexibly grouped by pressures, species associations and other parameters

Plant surveillance

- Maintain the threatened bryophyte database and produce a forward plan for its future development
- Work with the country agencies and the Botanical Society of the British Isles to formulate proposals for the surveillance of vascular plants

Biological Records Centre (BRC)

- In partnership with BRC, support national species recording schemes; in particular, produce distribution atlases for aculeates (part), fleas, millipedes, woodlice and mayflies
- 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

- **Key target:** Develop a system for monitoring habitat, species and earth heritage interest features on A/SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites, in close collaboration with the country agencies and other organisations; in particular:
 - produce a third interim report on work to date within the first 6-year monitoring cycle
 - complete guidance chapters for monitoring marine mammals, invertebrates, lower plants, lowland wetlands, and freshwater features, and integrate and disseminate completed guidance
 - implement a comprehensive quality assurance programme for designated site monitoring

Monitoring pollutant levels in birds

- Produce an annual report summarising levels of pollutants in birds analysed during the previous year

UK wildlife statistics

- Measure progress towards the 2010 target to significantly reduce the rate of global biodiversity loss and UK BAP targets, and contribute to the Defra review of wildlife statistics, by publishing and interpreting information on the status and trends of UK biodiversity

6.6. Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Grant in aid		1,714
Other income		86
Total		1,800

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Salaries		555
Direct expenditure		1,245
Total		1,800

7. Making nature conservation information accessible

7.1. 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 process of public sector reform. 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.

The 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.

7.2. Drivers of the JNCC's work

The main drivers of our work are:

- Reporting obligations of MEAs, European directives and the UK BAP
- Government's agenda for public sector reform

7.3. Achievements in 2003/04

Key achievements during 2003/04 included:

To be completed

7.4. Overview of 2004/05

Our overall aims are:

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

To meet these aims we will need to remain at the forefront of technological developments. During the next year, we will use our technical expertise to maintain and enhance Recorder and 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 Facility (GBIF).

The internet will increasingly become the principal channel for delivering information to our stakeholders, and so website development will remain a high priority. Linked to the implementation of a content management system, we will improve the content and layout of the JNCC website so that the main customers for our information can rely on it as a primary reference source. Internally, we will begin to develop electronic records management systems that will support more efficient working practices across the organisation and enable us to meet e-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.

7.5. Targets for 2004/05

National Biodiversity Network (NBN)

- **Key target:** Deliver improvements to the NBN Gateway so that it meets the needs of the JNCC and partner organisations; in particular:
 - develop efficient update mechanisms

- extend the functionality of the Gateway to include habitat data, and to allow it to hold and report on additional attributes
- make any enhancements necessary to ensure that the Gateway delivers a robust and reliable service for users
- Provide a targeted service aiding voluntary sector use of the NBN Gateway that leads to growth in content relevant to nature conservation
- In consultation with NBN partners, produce a three-year plan for the development of the Gateway

Recorder

- Provide a second-line support service for Recorder 2002 users that efficiently fixes technical problems, makes small-scale enhancements to solve generic user efficiency problems, and disseminates user best practice
- Subject to successful testing, in March 2005 release a new version of Recorder designed to meet the needs of record centres and schemes collating very large volumes of data, that can automate updates of these data to the NBN Gateway and that helps existing Recorder users extract and use data
- Review the uptake of Recorder and its contribution to the goal of delivering access to data in a standard format, and assess the views of stakeholders as to its future development

Marine data management

- Ensure marine data held externally continue to add to national (JNCC and NBN) data holdings on at least a biannual basis, particularly via country agency and MarLIN (Marine Life Information Network for Britain and Ireland) sources, and are accessible through websites
- Complete the development of Marine Recorder by developing analytical and reporting tools and a GIS interface

European and global information systems

- Help to ensure that the UK has good evidence against which to assess the benefits of continuing engagement with GBIF by a) contributing to the 'third-year review' of GBIF, b) facilitating NBN and collections sector contribution of data to GBIF, and c) promoting use of GBIF in assessment of the 2010 target to significantly reduce the rate of global biodiversity loss

Biodiversity reporting

- Support Defra in contributing to the United Nations Environment Programme work on harmonisation of biodiversity reporting
- Support Defra in tracking the development of the proposed EC Reporting Framework Directive and provide advice on its implications for biodiversity reporting

Website development

- **Key target:** By December 2004, deliver the JNCC website via a content management system so that it contains balanced coverage of UK-level conservation issues, improves the ease with which detailed information and advice can be found, and is ready for rapid adoption of new branding and information to support strategy and FMPR changes
- Provide support for JNCC targets requiring web-based outputs or intranet facilities
- Complete a review of the JNCC's intranet and its future role

Communications

- Produce three issues of the JNCC newsletter, *Nature News*, each year
- By July 2004, produce the JNCC's annual report for 2003/04
- Provide high-quality support to launches and issue timely press releases
- Produce a revised JNCC publications catalogue

Electronic document and record management

- Produce a managed electronic repository of the JNCC's published outputs and establish archiving policies with the National Archives and the British Library

7.6. Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Grant in aid		711
Other income		74
Total		785

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Salaries		581
Direct expenditure		204
Total		785

8. Supporting the JNCC's business by providing high-quality services

8.1. Introduction

Sections 2-7 of the corporate plan describe the JNCC's nature conservation priorities and targets for 2004/05. 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 the JNCC's business needs, and must also be responsive to the Government's agenda for public sector reform.

8.2. Drivers of the JNCC's work

The main drivers of our work are:

- Government initiatives for public sector reform
- The JNCC's Financial, Management and Policy Review (FMPR)
- Ongoing development of the JNCC's strategy

8.3. Achievements in 2003/04

Key achievements during 2003/04 included:

To be completed

8.4. Overview of 2004/05

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 the JNCC can create, manage and use information efficiently and share it with partners.

In line with the recommendations arising from the JNCC's FMPR, the JNCC will establish a company limited by guarantee in April 2005, 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. This will be a major programme of work during 2004/05.

The changes associated with the FMPR will be complemented by a fundamental review of the JNCC's strategic direction. Following the agreement of new strategic objectives for the organisation, the priority over the next year will be to ensure that the necessary management systems and structures are in place to allow the strategy to be implemented efficiently and effectively.

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 aim to reduce running costs by at least 3%, provide enhanced e-mail facilities, and prepare a staff training and development strategy.

8.5. Targets for 2004/05

Corporate governance

- Achieve a full Statement of Internal Control by maintaining effective corporate governance arrangements
- **Key target:** By December 2004, make the necessary changes to management structures and systems to facilitate implementation of the JNCC's strategy, and develop stakeholders' understanding of the strategy

- Dependent on the outcome of research and decisions made by the Joint Committee, develop and launch a new business profile for the JNCC in line with the launch of the strategy

Financial management

- In consultation with English Nature, submit the JNCC's accounts for 2003/04 by agreed dates, and ensure that the organisation receives a satisfactory audit outcome
- Ensure that 95% of all invoices are paid by the due date

Human resources management

- Maintain turnover of permanent and fixed-term appointment staff at between 10% and 12% for 2004/05
- Develop and deliver a training programme that provides an average of 3 days training per person and that equips JNCC staff with the necessary skills to fulfill current and future roles
- Prepare a training and development strategy to underpin the JNCC's operational strategy

Office facilities

- Reduce running costs by at least 3% over the course of the year
- Meet all obligations relating to Health and Safety legislation

IT support

- Define a service level for the provision of IT services, and develop and document improved service management, support response and contingency working practices
- By December 2004, provide a service that allows outposted staff (including Lead Co-ordination Network officers) access to the JNCC network, and allows all staff secure internet access to e-mail
- Review the service needed from JNCC inter-office network links, video-conferencing and telephony services, and renew these to gain service improvements and economies by October 2004

Implementation of FMPR recommendations

- **Key target:** By April 2005, implement the recommendations arising from the JNCC's FMPR; in particular:
 - negotiate a single set of terms and conditions for JNCC staff and manage the transfer of staff to the new organisation
 - work with Defra to progress through to completion a Regulatory Reform Order to amend the Environmental Protection Act
 - complete preparation for establishing a company limited by guarantee and put in place appropriate corporate governance arrangements
 - put in place the necessary finance and HR infrastructure for the new organisation

8.6. Planned resources

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Grant in aid		1,828
Other income		8
Total		1,836

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Salaries		988
Direct expenditure		848
Total		1,836

9. Funding summary

Table 2. Total planned expenditure by strategic theme

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Providing advice on international conservation issues		457
Furthering nature conservation in a European context		686
Providing scientific advice on the sustainable use of natural resources		608
Developing common standards for nature conservation and co-ordinating UK approaches		432
Assessing the status of UK biodiversity and earth heritage		1,800
Making nature conservation information accessible		785
Supporting the JNCC's business by providing high-quality services		1,836
Total		6,604

Table 3. Balance between salaries and direct expenditure

<i>All figures are £k</i>	2003/04 (out-turn)	2004/05
Salaries		3,437
Direct expenditure		3,167
Total		6,604

Annex A. Glossary

A		H	
ACCOBAMS	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area	HAP	Habitat Action Plan
AEWA	African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement	HR	Human resources
ASCOBANS	Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas	I	
ASSI	Area of Special Scientific Interest	ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Seas
B		IPPC	Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan	IT	Information technology
Bern Convention	Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats	IUCN	The World Conservation Union
Bonn Convention	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals	J	
BRC	Biological Records Centre	JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology	M	
C		MarLIN	Marine Life Information Network for Britain and Ireland
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna	MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy	MONARCH	Modelling Natural Resource Responses to Climate Change
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity	N	
CEH	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology	NBN	National Biodiversity Network
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species	NVC	National Vegetation Classification
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species (Bonn Convention)	O	
D		OSPAR	Oslo and Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the north-east Atlantic
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	P	
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	PEBLDS	Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy
DfT	Department for Transport	PSA	Public Service Agreement
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry	R	
E		RMNC	Review of Marine Nature Conservation
EC	European Community	S	
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	SAC	Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive
EU	European Union	SAP	Species Action Plan
F		SCI	Sites of Community Importance
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
FMPR	Financial, Management and Policy Review	SPA	Special Protection Area under the Birds Directive
FTA	Fixed term appointment	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
G		W	
GBIF	Global Biodiversity Information Facility	WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
GCR	Geological Conservation Review	WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
GIS	Geographic Information System	WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism		

Annex B. Contact details

JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee Monkstone House City Road Peterborough PE1 1JY	Tel: 01733 562626 Fax: 01733 555948 Website: http://www.jncc.gov.uk e-mail: firstname.surname@jncc.gov.uk
JNCC (Seabirds and Cetaceans; Marine Advice)	Joint Nature Conservation Committee Dunnet House 7 Thistle Place Aberdeen AB10 1UZ	Tel: 01224 655702 (Seabirds and Cetaceans) Tel: 01224 655704 (Marine Advice) Fax: 01224 621488 Website: http://www.jncc.gov.uk e-mail: firstname.surname@jncc.gov.uk
Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)	Countryside Council for Wales Maes-y-Ffynnon Penrhosgarnedd Bangor Gwynedd LL57 2DN	Tel: 01248 385500 Fax: 01248 355782 Website: http://www.ccw.gov.uk
English Nature	English Nature Northminster House Northminster Peterborough PE1 1UA	Tel: 01733 455000 Fax: 01733 568834 Website: http://www.english-nature.org.uk
Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Headquarters	Scottish Natural Heritage 12 Hope Terrace Edinburgh EH9 2AS	Tel: 0131 447 4784 Fax: 0131 446 2279 Website: http://www.snh.org.uk
SNH Research & Advisory Services Directorate	Scottish Natural Heritage 2 Anderson Place Bonnington Bond Edinburgh EH6 5NP	Tel: 0131 554 9797 Fax: 0131 446 2405 Website: http://www.snh.org.uk
The Countryside Agency	The Countryside Agency John Dower House Crescent Place Cheltenham Gloucester GL50 3RA	Tel: 01242 521381 Fax: 01242 226027 Website: http://www.countryside.gov.uk
Environment and Heritage Service	Environment & Heritage Service Commonwealth House 35 Castle Street Belfast BT1 1GU	Tel: 01232 251477 Fax: 01232 546660 Website: http://www.ehsni.gov.uk
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