



Joint Nature Conservation Committee 107th Meeting Minutes Confirmed (non-confidential)

Date: 9 June 2016

Time: 08:45

Venue: SNH offices, Silvan House, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7AT

Present

Professor Ian Bateman

Independent member

Dr Bob Brown

Independent member

Professor Colin Galbraith

Independent member

Professor Chris Gilligan

Independent Chair

Dr Madeleine Havard

Natural Resources Wales

Dr Joe Horwood

Natural England

Professor Michel Kaiser

Independent member

Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Professor Howard Platt

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

Mr Ian Ross

Scottish Natural Heritage

Dr Susan Walker

Scottish Natural Heritage

In attendance

Dr Steve Gibson

JNCC

Dr John Goold

JNCC

Mrs Sue Bennett

JNCC

Mr Matt Parsons (item 8)

JNCC

Mrs Tracey Quince

JNCC

Mr Paul Rose

JNCC

Mr Marcus Yeo

JNCC

Mr Colin Armstrong

DAERA

Mrs Ceri Davies

Natural Resources Wales

Dr Tim Hill

Natural England

Mr Ian Jardine

Scottish Natural Heritage

Mr Jonathan Capstick (items 5-7)

Defra

Ms Lucy Stone (items 5-7)

Defra

Apologies

Members:

Mr Guy Duke
Independent member

Ms Diane McCrea
Natural Resources Wales

Attendees:

Mrs Helen Anderson
DAERA

Sue McQueen, JNCC

1 Chairman's opening remarks

- 1.1 Professor Gilligan welcomed everyone to the 107th meeting of the JNCC, in particular Dr Madeleine Havard to her first meeting. Mr Ian Jardine was welcomed back to Scottish Natural Heritage following a secondment to the European Commission.
- 1.2 Professor Gilligan updated members on changes to the Committee. Natural Resources Wales has appointed Ms Diane McCrea to the Joint Committee. Members were given a short summary of her background and previous appointments.
- 1.3 Professor Gilligan reported that since the last Committee meeting he had met Professor Ian Boyd (Defra), Louise Heathwaite (Scottish Government) and Andy Clements (British Trust for Ornithology), and would be meeting Elaine King (Wildlife and Countryside Link) shortly.
- 1.4 Professor Gilligan informed the Committee that he had attended a meeting of the Chairs of Defra's arms-length bodies. One of the issues discussed was appointment to boards and the importance of balance in terms of gender and black and minority ethnic membership.
- 1.5 Professor Gilligan informed the Committee of the need to review how external relationships were managed and increase the effectiveness of communications. He asked members to think fundamentally about how business is conducted and how relationships are managed in order to raise JNCC's profile and optimise engagement with customers.

2 Declaration of interests

- 2.1 Professor Kaiser declared his roles as independent chair of the Seafish Science Advisory Group, independent chair of the international scientific committee overseeing the 'Pulse trawling project' in The Netherlands, and non-remunerated Director of P&O Maritime Ocean Sciences Ltd.
- 2.2 Professor Gilligan declared that the Epidemiology and Modelling Group, at the Cambridge University, of which he is head, had been retained by Defra to provide emergency quantitative modelling on a call-off basis.
- 2.3 Dr Brown declared his new role as Chair of the National Trust in Northern Ireland. Members congratulated him on his new appointment.

3 Minutes of the March 2016 meeting (official-sensitive) (JNCC 16 12)

4 Matters arising (JNCC 16 13)

- 4.1 There were no matters arising that were not addressed elsewhere in the agenda. An update on actions from meetings was provided in Annex 1.
- 4.2 Action point 1.7 – Dr Gibson confirmed that 1200-1400 JNCC datasets would be uploaded to data.gov.uk by the end of June. At present there was no signposting to country conservation body websites as the focus had needed to be on providing open access, but agreed with members that it would be necessary for links to be established to maximise the use of the data.
- 4.3 Action point 16.2 – Professor Bateman confirmed that the role of protected sites in wider landscapes was part of Defra’s 25-year environmental plan and therefore would be circulated once the plan was available.
- 4.4 Action point 6.4 – the skills audit for Committee members would take place shortly. Individual members would receive their previous submission in the next few days and would be asked to update their record. Members would be asked for permission to share a collated version of their skills with other members.

Action point(s)
AP01 Mrs Quince to circulate skills forms to members for updating.

5 Chief Executive’s report on topical issues (JNCC 16 14)

- 5.1 Mr Yeo reported the ministerial changes in the devolved administrations following the recent elections in May. Members noted that in Northern Ireland a draft Programme for Government Framework (2016-21) was out for public consultation.
- 5.2 The Committee was updated on income diversification plans and were informed of a bid JNCC was making for funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in relation to Overseas Territories. The need for appropriate governance to be established was discussed. It was agreed that a process should be established for the Committee to provide scrutiny of potential income-funded projects. Committee noted the positive impact the income diversification work was having on staff morale, but were mindful that this work should not detract from core activities.

6 Report from ARAC

- 6.1 Professor Galbraith, ARAC Chair, gave a presentation on key issues discussed at the ARAC meeting the previous day. He informed members that due to illness the meeting had not been quorate. A list of decisions required would be circulated to members in the next few days.
- 6.2 The meeting had focused on:

- i. internal audit, including the draft internal audit strategy and operational plan for 2016/17 and Head of Internal Audit opinion for 2015/16;
- ii. risk, including a look at significant risks for 2016/17 and new emerging risks;
- iii. the ARAC annual report to the Joint Committee; and
- iv. the draft Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) for 2015/16.

6.3 Committee was informed that:

- i. the internal audit plan for 2016/17 had been agreed, subject to full ARAC approval. The plan for 2017/18 had been discussed and ARAC had suggested the inclusion of a scientific evidence audit in 2017/18;
- ii. the Head of Internal Audit opinion for 2015/16 was Substantial Assurance which can be seen as excellent. The Joint Committee could therefore take assurance over the systems of internal control and governance;
- iii. the new significant risks register for 2016/17 had been agreed with the addition of a traffic light coding system;
- iv. new and emerging risks such as the Defra Target Operating Model (TOM) and the need to take greater risks to diversify income had been discussed;
- v. the draft ARA had been discussed and recommended for the Company Board to approve. ARAC discussed the need for improving some aspects of production of the ARA and for management to consider building greater resilience in the finance team; and
- vi. on health and safety, ARAC looked forward to the report on the findings of the recent stress survey due shortly.

6.4 Professor Galbraith advised that ARAC would consider for future annual reports the inclusion of an annual statement on risk and governance.

7 JNCC review: the role of the Joint Committee (official-sensitive) (JNCC 16 15)

8 Proposed method to inform the assessment of sufficiency of the UK marine SPA suite (official-sensitive) (JNCC 16 21)

9 Potential JNCC role as co-ordinating beneficiary of an EU LIFE Integrated Project on peatlands (official-sensitive) (JNCC 16 16)

10 End of year performance report 2015/16 (JNCC 16 19)

10.1 Mr Yeo introduced the paper explaining that JNCC's operating environment in 2015/16 had been extremely challenging and had impacted on corporate performance in many ways. Five of the fourteen priority performance measures (PPMs) had been achieved in full with nine having made substantial progress. The number of amber ratings in the report reflected the difficult and challenging year. The Executive Management Board was satisfied with the delivery of PPMs and financial performance in 2015/16.

10.2 The Committee made the following comments in discussion:

- i. given the significant challenges in 2015/16 the end of year performance should be seen as a good result;
- ii. it would be useful to highlight the amber ratings which were outside of JNCC's control and to provide a nuanced description of why some milestones had been missed;
- iii. work over-running from 2015/16 should not have an adverse effect on delivery of the 2016/17 business plan;
- iv. a staff turnover of 9.2% in a small specialised organisation was considered too high, especially considering that Mr Yeo confirmed that it was not evenly distributed. It would be helpful for members to see an anonymised analysis of exit forms to understand the reasons why staff leave the organisation.

10.3 The Committee congratulated Mr Yeo and the staff on a successful performance in a challenging year.

Action point(s)
AP05 Mrs Corney to provide the Committee with an anonymised analysis of exit forms to aid their understanding of the reasons why the staff turnover figure is high.

11 Joint Committee self-assessment: draft objectives for the Joint Committee, independent members' appraisals and an update on progress of other actions (JNCC 16 20)

11.1 Professor Gilligan presented the paper which provided the Committee with a draft set of working objectives and suggested leads for pursuing priority income areas. Professor Gilligan explained that the working objectives were not set in stone but were somewhat experimental in their first year of application.

11.2 The Committee **agreed** the nine draft working objectives.

11.3 Committee **agreed** the leads for priority income areas; these are contained in Annex 1 of the minutes for information. An additional lead for the training and accreditation area would be sought at a later date. The following comments were made in discussion:

- i. Professor Weeks should provide a 1-2-page brief setting out how members might engage with income generation prior to telephone meetings to discuss expectations, what needed to be achieved, exploring the connections they currently have, and prioritising the areas to take forward;
- ii. it was noted that time commitments would be less from country conservation body members than independent members;
- iii. sub-groups may need to be established for some areas.

11.4 The Committee welcomed the introduction of the appraisal form to formalise the current arrangements for independent members. Committee made the following comments in discussion:

- i. Professor Gilligan would undertake one to one meetings with all members of the Committee to discuss their contributions and any training/development requirements; and
 - ii. the contributions made by the country conservation body members would be self-reported at the end of each financial year and captured in a year-end report.
- 11.5 The Committee **agreed** the appraisal form and process for appraising independent members' performance.
- 11.6 The Committee **noted** the update on the other Committee effectiveness actions contained in annex 3 of the paper.

Action point(s)
AP06 Professor Weeks to provide a 1-2-page brief setting out how members might lead on the priority income areas prior to arranging telephone meetings to discuss the requirements.

12 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's annual report to the Joint Committee (JNCC 16 18)

- 12.1 Professor Galbraith presented the paper which set out the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's report for the year ending 31 March 2016.
- 12.2 The Committee made the following comments in discussion:
- i. whilst moderate assurance in the scientific evidence area was not a matter for great concern, the inclusion of an audit in the 2017/18 audit programme to review the area again was welcomed;
 - ii. the word 'outstanding' in paragraph 1.4 of the report should be deleted and replaced with 'an excellent outcome'; and
 - iii. on the ARAC forward programme (Annex 2), equality and diversity to be added to 1 (v) of the standing agenda items list.
- 12.3 The Committee thanked Professor Galbraith for a comprehensive report. Committee asked for some thought to be given to presentation of future reports to reflect the vibrancy of ARAC and avoid the formulaic nature of reporting.

13 Report from the MPA sub-group (Oral)

- 13.1 Dr Brown gave an oral update.
- 13.2 The MPA Sub Group had handled two consultations since the last meeting, both via exchange of emails:
- i. *Liverpool Bay Departmental Brief* - relating to a proposed extension of the SPA. A number of comments were made and these were actioned by staff. Following this, Professor Kaiser (acting as Chair of the MPA Sub Group in Dr Brown's absence) notified Professor Gilligan that members were content for

the document to progress onwards to ministers. Dr Brown thanked Professor Kaiser for stepping in to process this consultation;

- ii. *Seas off St Kilda and Seas off Foula SPAs departmental brief* - a number of comments were made, most notably in relation to overlaps between the proposed designation and existing designated site boundaries. Staff were currently working through these, and it was hoped a recommendation to Professor Gilligan was imminent;
- iii. the next meeting of the MPA Sub Group would be in Aberdeen on 1 July, with a range of issues to consider including Skomer pSPA, porpoise SACs, update on SPAs, progress with the UK MPA network, and latest developments in relation to tranche 3 of the MCZ network.

14 Joint Committee Forward Programme (JNCC 16 22)

- 14.1 Mr Yeo presented the paper and informed the Committee that a strategic multi-year forward plan would be developed in the coming months.
- 14.2 No further comments were made on the Committee forward programme.
- 14.3 The Committee was reminded that an event was being planned for the afternoon of Wednesday 30 November at the David Attenborough building in Cambridge that all Committee members were invited to attend. Details would follow shortly and members were asked to diarise the event. The ARAC meeting planned for that afternoon had been moved to the morning.
- 14.4 Committee was informed that the next meeting would take place in Peterborough on Thursday 22 September 2016.

15 Any other business

- 15.1 In relation to agenda item 5 (paragraph 5.2), volunteers were sought to consider the bid for Foreign and Commonwealth Office funding to undertake work in the Overseas Territories. Professor Gilligan, Dr Brown, Professor Galbraith, Professor Kaiser and Professor Bateman agreed to undertake this role.

Annex 1

Agreed leads for priority income areas

No.	Priority area	Committee leads (all leads are non-executive members)	
1	EU	Guy Duke (I)	Ian Bateman (I)
2	Other governments	Colin Galbraith (I)	Madeleine Havard
3	Environmental data services	Chris Gilligan (I)	Mike Kaiser (I)
4	Natural capital and ecosystem services	Ian Bateman (I)	Guy Duke (I)
5	Overseas Territories and other international funding opportunities	Colin Galbraith (I)	Bob Brown (I)
6	Research Councils	Chris Gilligan (I)	Ian Bateman (I) / Mike Kaiser (I)
7	Services to third parties on issues pertaining to conservation law	Hilary Kirkpatrick	Madeleine Havard
8	Training and accreditation	Madeleine Havard	To be agreed
9	Environmental standards services	Bob Brown (I)	Susan Walker