



The one-hundred-and-sixth meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to be held at 0900 hours on 17 March 2016, at JNCC, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1JY

This paper is provided to the Joint Committee for decision/discussion or information. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for Committee's position on the paper.

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Chief Executive's report on topical issues

Executive summary

Sponsor director: Marcus Yeo

1. Action required

- 1.1. The Joint Committee is asked to **note** the issues raised in the paper and **discuss** as appropriate.

2. Key issues

- 2.1. This paper summarises a range of topical issues currently being dealt with by JNCC staff.
- 2.2. The JNCC Chair and Chief Executive are scheduled to meet the Defra minister, Rory Stewart, on 15 March. An oral update will be provided at the Committee meeting on 17 March.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Chief Executive's report on topical issues

Paper by Marcus Yeo

1. Overview

- 1.1. As noted in the Chief Executive's report to the November Committee meeting, JNCC is operating within a context of major change across the public sector.
- 1.2. Following the Spending Review announcement in November, we are now close to having an agreed JNCC budget for 2016/17. High-level planning has been undertaken to identify how we will make the necessary reductions in expenditure. An outline business plan for 2016/17 is presented in a separate paper to the March Committee meeting.
- 1.3. The government of review of JNCC is well underway, and is scheduled for completion in June 2016.
- 1.4. Other elements of Defra's transformation programme are continuing to involve JNCC to varying degrees. For example, there are ongoing changes to the way in which policy and evidence functions and corporate services will be delivered.
- 1.5. Devolved elections take place on 5 May and the EU referendum takes place on 23 June. It will largely be 'business as usual' for JNCC until we enter the formal pre-election periods.
- 1.6. Despite the additional work needed to deal with the various change initiatives, and uncertainty about the future, JNCC staff are continuing to deliver the work programme for 2015/16 (as described in the quarter 3 performance report). Notable successes over the last few months include:
 - i. taking on the role of UK National Contact Point for the EU LIFE programme;
 - ii. coordinating a large suite of projects within the Defra Earth Observation Centre of Excellence;
 - iii. publishing the 2015 annual update of the UK biodiversity indicators;
 - iv. supporting public consultations on Special Areas of Conservation for harbour porpoise and marine Special Protection Areas.

2. People changes

- 2.1. The voluntary exit scheme has concluded, and eight staff will be leaving JNCC by the end of March 2016, some of them after many years of service with JNCC. Some restructuring of teams and programmes is being undertaken in response to the staff departures and other changes.
- 2.2. JNCC's new Business Development and Marketing Manager has been in post since December, and is driving forward work to diversify and increase JNCC's income (as reported in the paper on income for the March Committee meeting). This is a substantial shift in the way JNCC operates, but is already bearing fruit.

- 2.3. A new Wales Relationship Manager has also been in post since December. This post is based in the National Resources Wales office in Cardiff and has close links to Welsh Government. The intention is to facilitate a closer working relationship between JNCC, NRW and Welsh Government, and help JNCC better understand and meet Welsh priorities. It is a model of working that JNCC might replicate in other parts of the UK.
- 2.4. JNCC currently has senior staff working within Defra to support the JNCC review, to lead projects within the Earth Observation Centre of Excellence, and to take forward work on environmental data. This has proved highly beneficial in enabling JNCC to bring expertise to bear on important areas of work, and to ensure that the requirements of devolved administrations are appropriately considered.