



## Joint Nature Conservation Committee 113th Meeting Minutes Confirmed

**Date:** 29 November 2017

**Time:** 08.45

**Venue:** Natural Resources Wales,

### Present

**Professor Ian Bateman**  
Independent member

**Professor Colin Galbraith**  
Independent member

**Professor Chris Gilligan**  
Independent Chair

**Dr Madeleine Havard**  
Natural Resources Wales

**Dr Joe Horwood**  
Natural England

**Dr Hilary Kirkpatrick**  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

**Professor Howard Platt**  
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

**Dr Susan Walker**  
Scottish Natural Heritage

### In attendance

**Pat Corker**  
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs,  
Northern Ireland

**Mr Mike Evans**  
Natural Resources Wales

**Dr Jon Davies**  
JNCC

**Dr Tim Hill**  
Natural England

**Ms Sue Bennett**  
JNCC

**Professor Christine Maggs**  
JNCC

**Mrs Tracey Quince**  
JNCC

**Mr Paul Rose**  
JNCC

**Ms Sally Thomas**  
Scottish Natural Heritage

**Mr Marcus Yeo**  
JNCC

**Dr Jane Hawkrige (item 13)**  
JNCC

**Dr Christina Herbon (item 13)**  
JNCC

**Ms Becky Phillips (items 1-5 and 13)**  
JNCC

**Dr Vin Fleming (Item 14)**  
JNCC

## Apologies

### Members

Dr Mike Cantlay  
Scottish Natural Heritage

Diane McCrea  
Natural Resources Wales

### Attendees

Mrs Helen Anderson  
DAERA

Ms Ceri Davies  
Natural Resources Wales

Dr Steve Gibson  
JNCC

Dr John Goold  
JNCC

Ms Sue McQueen  
JNCC

### Observers

Professor Michael Winter  
Natural England

## 1 Closed session with members

## 2 Chairman's opening remarks

- 2.1 Professor Gilligan welcomed Ms Pat Corker, Principal Scientific Officer at the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland. Ms Corker gave members a brief introduction to her role at DAERA.
- 2.2 Professor Gilligan reported on a recent meeting with the Defra minister Thérèse Coffey. The meeting had been very positive with the minister being supportive of JNCC's work.
- 2.3 Professor Gilligan reported on the recent interviews for independent Committee members. The Secretary of State had approved the appointments and approval from the devolved administrations was awaited. An announcement on the three successful candidates would be made once approval from all administrations was received. Professor Gilligan confirmed that Professors Bateman and Galbraith had both been extended for a further four years from 1 November 2017.
- 2.4 Professor Gilligan reported that a meeting with the Welsh Cabinet Secretary, Lesley Griffiths was in the diary for January, and meetings with ministers and officials in Scotland and Northern Ireland would be sought in the new year.
- 2.5 Professor Gilligan commented on the excellent quality of the papers for the meeting, which was echoed by members. Work to scope papers in advance of drafting, alongside early discussions between Directors and paper authors, was contributing towards the improvement in paper quality overall.

- 2.6 The structure of sub-committees of the Joint Committee would be discussed at the March 2018 meeting.
- 2.7 Professor Gilligan informed members of the Defra review of science and evidence which was to commence shortly. The terms of reference for the review would be circulated to Committee members. There was still, however, a need to review JNCC's science. A discussion was required between Professor Gilligan, Mr Yeo and Professor Maggs to formulate proposals to come back to the Committee.
- 2.8 Professor Gilligan reported that the objective of the Chairs/CEO meetings should be reviewed in order for the meetings to be re-established in the new year. Professor Gilligan and Mr Yeo to discuss and agree the objectives.
- 2.9 The Committee discussed the role JNCC might play as the policy landscape changes following the UK's exit from the EU. Mr Yeo noted that this could form part of a wider strategic discussion about JNCC's future role. Members noted the importance of taking account of devolved administration perspectives and political sensitivities.

Action point(s)
<p>AP01. Professor Maggs to circulate the terms of reference for the Defra review of science and evidence to Joint Committee members.</p> <p>AP02. Professor Gilligan and Mr Yeo to discuss the objectives of the Chairs/CEO meetings with a view to the meetings being re-established in the new year.</p> <p>AP03. Mr Yeo and Professor Gilligan to agree how to engage Committee in a discussion on JNCC's future role.</p>

### **3 Declaration of interests**

- 3.1 No new declarations were made.

### **4 Confidential minutes of the September 2017 meeting (JNCC 17 45)**

- 4.1 The minutes of the September meeting were approved.

### **5 Matters arising (JNCC 17 46)**

- 5.1 There were no matters arising for this meeting.
- 5.2 The Committee noted the report of outstanding actions in Annex 1. Members noted the delay with the paper on external communications and stressed the importance of this area in maintaining and increasing JNCC's profile to ensure it remained influential and prepared for future reviews.

- 5.3 Mr Yeo informed members of various conferences in which JNCC was involved. It was agreed that a list of future conferences would be circulated to members giving sufficient advance notice.
- 5.4 Professor Gilligan drew members' attention to annex 3 of the paper, the priority research questions. It was agreed that these needed further work, including input from the country nature conservation bodies.
- 5.5 The Committee noted the complex arrangements on marine governance in annex 2 of the paper.

Action point(s)
<p>AP04. Ms Meadows to circulate a link to the JNCC website for members to include in their own websites to help raise JNCC's profile.</p> <p>AP05. Professor Maggs to circulate a list of future conferences to members.</p>

## **6 Chief Executive's report on topical issues (official-sensitive) (JNCC 17 47)**

- 6.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **7 Factors affecting implementation of JNCC's strategy (official) (JNCC 17 48)**

- 7.1 The minute for this item was taken in confidence.

## **8 Report from Marine Protected Area (MPA) Sub-Group (Oral)**

- 8.1 The MPA Sub-Group had not met so there was no oral report for this meeting.

## **9 Report from ARAC on 28 November (Official)**

- 9.1 Professor Galbraith gave a presentation on the key issues discussed at the ARAC meeting on 28 November.
- 9.2 The meeting had focussed on a number of matters and the Committee was informed that:
  - i. the Q2 position in relation to the scientific evidence quality assurance area had improved since Q1;
  - ii. ARAC reviewed progress on the delivery of the internal audit programme and considered the draft external audit for 2017/18 as well as the scoping for three specific audits. ARAC had recommended a key change in the audit strategy to focus on EU exit risks and their impact on financial

statements. ARAC also noted an additional risk for the preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts with the departure of the Head of Finance in January. ARAC is monitoring the outcome of a transformation project within JNCC to make the risk appetite a more useful tool to assist managers in making and delegating decisions at the right level;

- iii. ARAC was concerned to hear of the current level of stretch for staff within JNCC and emphasised the need for strong leadership at a difficult and unpredictable time. ARAC noted that JNCC was currently developing a new high-level structure that would be ready for discussion early in the new year;
- iv. ARAC discussed the CITES UNICORN system and the risks relating to EU exit day one readiness. The JNCC ARAC Chair will be writing to Defra's Audit and Risk Committee Chair to highlight the issue again;
- v. JNCC is engaged with an arms-length body working group that has been established to refine and simplify the Defra risk management process. ARAC agreed that more work was needed on a feedback loop with Defra. ARAC also welcomed the reestablishment of the JNCC Sponsors Group;
- vi. ARAC discussed implications for JNCC of the recent cyber security attack in JNCC and noted the ongoing investigation being undertaken by the Defra Fraud Investigation Team;
- vii. ARAC discussed a report on a review of its effectiveness. The review had concluded that ARAC is an effective committee. A small number of actions were agreed, including greater engagement with audit committees in Defra, devolved administrations and country bodies to share risk information, and annual appraisals for ARAC members;
- viii. There is a need to make an appointment to ARAC as soon as possible from the new independent members to ensure quoracy and a replacement for Dr Sue Walker whose term of appointment is due to expire in March.

9.3 The Committee noted the report from ARAC. The Committee discussed the pressures in reporting on evidence quality assurance. On the cyber security attack, the Committee asked that the investigation consider the robustness of JNCC's systems and that ARAC consider the detail of the investigation report and provide a report to them on the key messages.

Action point(s)
AP06 ARAC to consider the report from the investigation on the cyber security attack and report key messages to the Joint Committee.

## 10 Report from Chief Scientists Group (Official-sensitive) (JNCC

## **17 49)**

10.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **11 Quarter 2 performance report 2017/18 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 17 51)**

11.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **12 Business plan for 2018/19 (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 17 50)**

12.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **13 Marine assessment work in JNCC (official-sensitive) (JNCC 17 52)**

13.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **14 Changes to governance documentation (Official) (JNCC 17 53)**

14.1 Mrs Quince introduced this item explaining the paper contained changes to the Committee's standing orders and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's terms of reference.

14.2 The Committee discussed the changes to both documents and approved them.

## **15 Development of post 20-20 global biodiversity targets (official-sensitive) (JNCC 17 54)**

15.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **16 Update on JNCC's EU exit activities (Official-sensitive) (JNCC 17 55)**

16.1 This item was taken in confidence.

## **17 Joint Committee forward programme (Official) (JNCC 17 56)**

17.1 Professor Gilligan informed the Committee that the plan was to produce a full 12-month forward programme. A meeting between himself and Mrs Quince was planned in January to begin this process. The Committee noted the increasing quality of papers, largely due to the introduction of better planning through the use of scoping documents.

17.2 The next meeting will be held in Edinburgh on Wednesday 7 March. An engagement event with Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Government

would be planned for 6 March. Members asked that more time be given at the next event for networking and informal discussions with colleagues.

## **18 Any other business**

Nothing further was discussed.