



This paper was 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.

To view other Joint Committee papers and minutes visit <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-2671>

To find out more about JNCC visit <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-1729>

## **JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

### **INVOLVEMENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN JNCC WORK**

#### **Paper by Malcolm Vincent**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Consideration has been given at various times to how members of the Joint Committee might most appropriately engage with the work of the JNCC over and above the work undertaken in connection with formal meetings of the Joint Committee and, prospectively, at meetings of the Board of Directors of the JNCC Company. This paper proposes mechanisms for involving Committee members in the JNCC's work in the future.
- 1.2 The paper suggests that provision be made for a subgroup to contribute to the process and planning aspects of the Joint Committee's work. One of the benefits of such an arrangement is perceived to be that this will free up time in Joint Committee meetings for more discussion on the conservation and scientific aspects of JNCC's work.

#### **2. Future involvement of Committee members in JNCC work**

- 2.1 It may be helpful to consider the future involvement of Committee members in JNCC's work under five headings, namely:
  - i. the JNCC Audit and Risk Management Committee
  - ii. a possible future 'Process' subgroup
  - iii. a possible future 'Vision' subgroup
  - iv. involvement of Committee members in other programmes
  - v. 'outreach' responsibilities of Committee members

These are considered further below.

##### *JNCC Audit and Risk Management Committee*

- 2.2 The Joint Committee agreed to establish a JNCC Audit and Risk Management Committee as a sub-committee of the company Board at its September 2004 meeting (JNCC 04 P17B). The Committee will take over internal audit responsibilities for the JNCC from English Nature's Internal Audit Committee once the JNCC Company is established.

- 2.3 The role of the JNCC Audit and Risk Management Committee will be to:
- i. promote a climate of financial discipline and internal control to reduce the opportunity for financial or other mismanagement;
  - ii. advise the Board and Managing Director, and through him/her and English Nature's Chief Executive in lead Accounting Officer role, the Chief Executives of Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales who act jointly with English Nature's Chief Executive as JNCC's Accounting Officer on:
    - a. priorities for the internal audit team including its long-term plan and annual work programme;
    - b. all internal and external audit matters;
    - c. the adequacy of risk management policy and the implications of assurances provided in respect of risk and control in the organisation;
  - iii. promote the understanding of internal audit's role and value within the JNCC;
  - iv. commission value for money audits through the internal audit service provider;
  - v. commission audits of individual projects as required;
  - vi. consider environmental audit issues.
- 2.4 The JNCC Audit and Risk Management Committee was established as a shadow committee in the autumn of 2004 and will run in parallel with English Nature's Audit and Risk Management Committee until the JNCC Company is established. The membership of the Committee is given in Annex 1.

*Process subgroup*

- 2.5 With the establishment of the JNCC Company, and with the remaining aspects of the FMPR prospectively being taken forward through the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill, the expectancy is that the work of the FMPR subgroup will come to an end. The only outstanding task is to review the success of the FMPR project on its completion.
- 2.6 The FMPR subgroup has provided a valuable forum over the last few years in which higher-level issues relevant to the governance of the JNCC and its relationship with the country agencies and Government can be discussed in an open and constructive manner, and ways forward on often difficult, and sometimes contentious, issues can be identified for further consideration by the Joint Committee as a whole. As the effects of devolution become more pronounced, there may be considerable merit in maintaining a forum which

can continue to serve this function. In addition, there may be value in having a forum which can consider the nature and form of future Committee business, having regard to the desirability of implementing the JNCC strategy within the context of available resources.

2.7 A possible role for this subgroup could be to:

- i. consider and advise the Joint Committee on the timetable of future Committee business and on the presentation of that business to the Committee;
- ii. consider and advise the Joint Committee on the implementation of the JNCC strategy through the preparation of corporate and business plans, and on the need for any further development of the strategy;
- iii. consider and advise the Joint Committee on issues relevant to the delivery of UK and international advice to Government in the light of devolution and the policies pursued by UK Departments and devolved administration;
- vi. consider and advise the Joint Committee on resourcing issues including the preparation of Spending Review submissions, approval of pay remits, and setting terms and conditions for the JNCC's Managing Director.

*Vision subgroup*

2.8 The Strategic Vision Programme within the 2005-08 corporate plan sets out a programme of future work to develop a framework of targets, strategies and other measures for nature conservation. The process for this is proposed in JNCC 05 D01. In this paper, it is recommended that a subgroup be established to steer the development of the framework and formulate a process for engaging key stakeholders in that development. In particular, the subgroup could:

- i. consider how Government, the country agency boards/councils and other stakeholders should be involved in the development of the framework;
- ii. define and elaborate the main components of the framework, and identify the work needed to develop it to substantive completion within a 2 year time-frame;
- iii. develop a process for identifying roles and responsibilities within the framework, and of ways and means of taking it forward through JNCC work programmes;
- iv. develop a communications strategy.

It is suggested that the composition of this subgroup could reflect that of the former strategy subgroup.

*Other Programmes and Outreach Responsibilities*

- 2.9 In relation to contributing directly to the delivery of the JNCC's work programmes, the JNCC Chairman sits on an inter-departmental Ministerial group concerned with UK support to the international biodiversity effort, and Professor Pentreath chairs the Marine Natura Project Board. While it may not be desirable to go down the road of allocating Committee Members topic responsibilities as a routine (because this generates additional work for already hard-pressed staff, and can create topic 'champions' within Committee) there may well be additional areas where it would be extremely beneficial to engage individual Committee members directly in the JNCC work programmes, for example in relation to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan or in developing a UK framework for the monitoring and surveillance of biological and geological diversity. Members who had such duties and responsibilities would be well-placed to lead in communicating the JNCC's views on these issues in relevant high-level fora or with Ministers and senior officials. There could thus be a clear linkage between Committee members' responsibilities for 'Other Programmes' and responsibilities for 'Outreach' activity (see Annex 1).
- 2.10 The Joint Committee, through its work on the FMPR, has considered the role of independent Committee members in supporting the JNCC Chairman in communicating JNCC's views and priorities to Ministers, senior Government officials and other stakeholders, and, indeed, also in providing feedback to the Committee on the views of these contacts. Consideration needs to be given as to how this can be implemented in practice, since independent members will need to be sufficiently briefed to be able to undertake this role effectively, and will need to be confident that they are promoting the views of the Committee. Moreover, it is not only the independent members who could play such a role: country agency Chairmen have access to Ministers and senior officials, and Northern Ireland members and country agency second members could also contribute to this effort.
- 2.11 In summary, it is suggested that:
- i. certain Committee members be allocated responsibilities for contributing directly to the delivery of the JNCC's work programmes when there is an operational need for this; such allocation having regard to expertise and availability of members. Members having such roles will also have a role in communicating the JNCC's views on these issues in relevant high-level fora;
  - ii. independent members be given a role in communicating the JNCC's views and priorities to senior external stakeholders, and be provided with the necessary briefing to enable them to undertake this role;
  - iii. consideration be given also to the role of country agency Chairmen, second members and Northern Ireland members in communicating the

JNCC's views and priorities to senior stakeholders. Country agency members have a particular role in fostering a sense of shared ownership of the JNCC's work within their councils/boards.

### 3. **Indicative responsibilities**

3.1 Following on from the foregoing analysis, an indicative list of Committee member responsibilities is given at Annex 1. Some of these, for example in relation to the Audit and Risk Management Committee, have already been agreed. Others, for example, in relation to the 'Process' and 'Vision' subgroups are dependent on whether the Joint Committee considers it worthwhile to establish such groups. Committee member participation in the 'Other Programme' and 'Outreach' activities is dependent on whether the Committee considers the approach advocated here is an appropriate one; at the moment, the entries for the involvement of members under these headings is incomplete and completion of these entries will be undertaken subsequent to the Committee discussion on the matter.

The Joint Committee is invited to comment on the points raised in the paper, and in particular on:

- i. the desirability of establishing an Process subgroup and on the membership of such a group were it to be established;
- ii. the desirability of establishing a Vision subgroup and on the membership of such a group were it to be established;
- iii. the principles guiding the allocation of member responsibilities to work contributing directly to the JNCC's work programme;
- iv. responsibilities for communicating the JNCC's strategies and priorities to Ministers, senior officials and other key stakeholders.

	<b>audit and risk management committee</b>	<b>process subgroup</b>	<b>vision subgroup</b>	<b>other programmes</b>	<b>outreach responsibilities</b>
Mr Adrian Darby		*	*	International biodiversity commitments	International
Dr Libby Andrews			*		
Dr Lucinda Blakiston-Houston		?	*		
Rev Dr Stuart Burgess					
Prof Peter Doyle		*	*		
Dr John Faulkner/Successor		*	?		
Ms Sarah Fowler	*		*		
Prof David Ingram	*	*			
Mr John Lloyd Jones		*			
Dr John Markland		*			
Dr Mike Moser		*			
Prof Jan Pentreath	*		*	Marine	Marine
Prof Janet Sprent	*		*		