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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

AN UPDATE ON JNCC'S WORK ON THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH AND THE UK CLEARING HOUSE MECHANISM

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1. Background

- 1.1 In December 2003, the Joint Committee considered a paper (JNCC 03 D14) on the JNCC approach to reviewing the use and implementation of the Ecosystem Approach. This included a project plan to be implemented by the JNCC with the appointment of an 'Ecosystems Officer' in January 2004.
- 1.2 This paper updates Committee on progress made with implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the UK and internationally, and future work in this area.
- 1.3 Further information on the Ecosystem Approach can be found in the December 2003 Committee paper and on the website of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

2. Use of the Ecosystem Approach

- 2.1 At the 7th CBD Conference of Parties CoP in February 2004 it was agreed that the Ecosystem Approach should be the primary mechanism for addressing the three objectives of the Convention in a balanced way. The Ecosystem Approach provides a framework for integrating the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components, and the equitable sharing of benefits from natural resources (the CBD's objectives).
- 2.2 The Ecosystem Approach therefore provides a method for achieving sustainable development based on the maintenance of fully functioning ecosystems. The core concept of the approach lies in integrating and managing the range of demands that humans place on the environment, such that it can indefinitely support essential services and provide benefits for all without deterioration to the natural environment. Working with a range of audiences over the last three years has found that when the Ecosystem Approach is phrased in these terms it is better understood and more easily applied as a concept.
- 2.3 At the 7th CBD CoP, Decision VII/11 led to all Parties being asked to:
 - i. apply the Ecosystem Approach, taking into account the principles and guidance contained in the annex to Decision V/6;

- ii. facilitate the exchange of experiences, capacity building, technology transfer and awareness raising to assist with the implementation of the ecosystem approach through the development of a web-based sourcebook.
- 2.4 Under Defra's Delivery Plan for the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2010 biodiversity loss target, there are commitments to:
- i. apply the Ecosystem Approach, and use it to promote wider application of the principle especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, for example through workshops;
 - ii. report on UK experience of the Ecosystem Approach to CBD CoP8 (March 2006) including collating information on UK experiences, and promoting application overseas and within the UK via the CBD Clearing House Mechanism website.

3. Meeting the requirements of the CBD and Defra

- 3.1 To assist with the delivery of CBD Decision VII/11, the JNCC has been working with the CBD Secretariat to produce the Ecosystem Approach Sourcebook. The Sourcebook contains:
- i. information on the Ecosystem Approach;
 - ii. user guides on how to apply the Approach;
 - iii. information on tools and similar approaches applicable to the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach;
 - iv. case studies which provide examples of how the Ecosystem Approach principles can be applied; and
 - v. a questionnaire for submitting further case studies.
- 3.2 The case study database allows the documentation of implementation practice against Ecosystem Approach principles, and an evaluation of methods used in addressing specific issues. This allows users of the Sourcebook to identify case studies that are applicable to their needs and situation. For example, a practitioner can evaluate if the way in which stakeholders have been engaged under a certain project is relevant to their circumstances. The database also allows the methods used to be classified as a range of tools which are related to Ecosystem Approach principles. This enables the cross-fertilisation of methods between sectors, biomes and CBD cross-cutting themes (e.g. impact assessment, tourism and alien species). The case studies will also be used to assess where there are gaps in the tools and techniques available for implementing the Ecosystem Approach. This assessment is a requirement of Decision VII/11 and will be reported to CBD CoP9 in 2008.

- 3.3 A draft version of the sourcebook was presented to CBD Parties and other interests at a side-event during the 10th meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) in February 2005. The Sourcebook is now available on the CBD website. To further encourage the use of the Sourcebook as tool for finding best practice and to encourage the submission of case studies to the database, the JNCC and the CBD Secretariat will run a side event at SBSTTA 11 in November 2005. The side event will demonstrate how the Sourcebook can be used and provide demonstrations on submitting case studies.
- 3.4 In the UK, workshops have been held with staff in the country agencies and Defra to facilitate understanding of the Ecosystem Approach. For example, a Defra workshop led to the production of a fact sheet for the nature conservation Directors of the four UK administrations. Other areas of work have involved advising Defra on the use of the Ecosystem Approach in developing criteria for project assessment under the Partners for Environmental Co-operation in Europe (PECE) initiative, and on the development of Defra's vision for natural resource use in the UK.
- 3.5 Work is underway to modify the UK Clearing House Mechanism website (CHM) so it is based on the concepts of the Ecosystem Approach Sourcebook. This will provide information on UK expertise, tools, and case studies linked to the Ecosystem Approach principles and CBD work programmes (ecosystem themes and cross-cutting issues). This work will mean that the UK CHM will be user-led, with the content explicitly linked to the user's information needs. This will increase applicability of the site for both the UK audience and that of developing countries. The current content of the UK CHM website will be used to populate the new version of the CHM.

4. Future work areas

- 4.1 The JNCC will continue to work with Defra and the country agencies to increase the application of the Ecosystem Approach. For example, workshops will be held in Northern Ireland in December 2005 on the Ecosystem Approach and Integrated Coastal Zone Management plans and the Peatland Conservation Policy Review. The integration of the Ecosystem Approach into Biodiversity Action Plans will also be encouraged through the Action Plan review process.
- 4.2 To meet CBD obligations and targets in Defra's WSSD development plan the JNCC will produce a booklet on the application of the Ecosystem Approach in the UK. This will include examples of UK projects that have made a significant contribution to the implementation of Ecosystem Approach principles. The booklet will be used in the UK to promote the Ecosystem Approach and will be presented at CBD CoP8 in March 2006. Future work with Defra will also include the facilitation of workshops on the application of the Ecosystem Approach in developing countries. Initial proposals have been discussed and a programme of work is expected in 2006.

- 4.3 Continued development of the UK CHM will include liaising with country specialists (in Government, nature conservation and other agencies, academics, etc) to identify what additional information should be added to reflect UK expertise. Case studies from UK projects and the Darwin Initiative will be added. Once sufficient case studies are included these will be analysed to assess where there are gaps in the tools and expertise necessary for meeting the objectives of the Ecosystem Approach. The results of this exercise will be fed into appropriate research fora.
- 4.4 Work will continue with the CBD Secretariat to increase the content of the Ecosystem Approach Sourcebook case study database. This information will be analysed to assess where there are gaps in the availability of tools required for implementing the Ecosystem Approach. Initial analysis has revealed a lack of tools available for assessing the economic value of ecosystem services and functions to society and establishing ecosystem function limits. The appointment of an economist to the JNCC in January 2006 will be particularly important in developing this area of work.