

JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE, HELD ON THURSDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2007 AT MONKSTONE HOUSE, CITY ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1JY

Present:

Dr Blakiston Houston
Dr Brown
Mr Christensen
Mr Crawley
Mr Darby (Chairman)
Professor Doyle
Professor Hill
Professor Ingram
Mr Lloyd Jones
Mr Pritchard
Mr Riddleston
Professor Usher
Professor Warren

In attendance:

Dr Parker
Mrs Quince
Mr Steer
Dr Tew
Dr Vincent
Mr Yeo
Dr Fleming (item 9)
Dr McKenzie (item 5)
Dr Mortimer (item 5)

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Decision Papers

6. JNCC position statement on transport biofuels and biodiversity (**JNCC 07 P13**)
7. The 2010 biodiversity targets – definition, measuring progress and identifying successor targets (**JNCC 07 P11**)
8. A UK vision and strategy for nature conservation (**JNCC 07 P09**)

Discussion Papers

9. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species: recent developments and future direction (**JNCC 07 D08**)

Information Papers

10. Determining which chemicals may have significant impacts on biodiversity (**JNCC 07 N08**)
11. Any other business

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

Decision Papers

12. Recent political changes and the implications for JNCC (**In confidence**) (**JNCC 07 P08**)
13. Review of Schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981: recent developments (**In confidence**) (**JNCC 07 P10**)

Discussion Papers

14. EC Habitats Directive – implications of establishing conservation status (**In confidence**) (**JNCC 07 D09**)

1. Chairman's opening remarks

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Mr Thin, Dr Jardine, Professor Galbraith, Mr Seymour, Mr Thomas and Ms Phillips.
- 1.2 Chairman informed the Committee that Dr Parker would be attending the meeting in place of Mr Thomas.
- 1.3 Chairman informed the Committee that this would be his final meeting and that Mr Peter Bridgewater would be taking over as Chairman on 1 October. Chairman thanked the Committee and staff of the support company for their hard work and dedication. Professor Ingram, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Chairman for steering the organisation through a productive period of great change and wished him well for the future.

Pre-Meetings

- 1.4 Chairman mentioned meetings which had taken place prior to the Committee meeting, namely:
 - i. the Process Working Group. The Group had looked at three areas:
 - a) *Corporate plan*. The Executive Management Board had agreed a provisional list of priorities over the next three years. The Group agreed that

there were too many priorities and they required focussing. The Group asked that more focus be given to communication with stakeholders, in particular senior Ministers including the Prime Minister;

b) *External communications strategy*. The Group asked that the strategy take account of new political arrangements. They also expressed the importance of making use of Committee members' contacts.

c) *Staff survey*. The Group discussed the findings of the survey, in particular in relation to communication between Committee members and staff. The Group recognised the current limited opportunities for communicating with staff but noted this should be balanced against the limited time Committee members are available. The Group asked that staff's expectations in this area should be managed to ensure they remained realistic. The Group agreed that workshops on specific topics involving both Committee members and staff would be beneficial.

- ii. the Audit and Risk Management Committee. A report of the meeting would be discussed at the Company Board meeting.

2. Declaration of interests

2.1 Mr Pritchard, employee of the RSPB.

2.2 Mr Riddleston, RSPB Council member.

2.3 Mr Darby, Vice-President of the RSPB.

2.4 Mr Christensen, member of the Management Board of Defra.

3. Amendments to the minutes of the seventy fifth meeting (JNCC 07 P07)

3.1 The minutes were agreed, subject to the amendments contained in JNCC 07 P07 and Mr Riddleston's name being added to the list of those present.

4. Matters arising (JNCC 07 P14)

4.1 The paper JNCC 07 P14 detailed the matters arising.

4.2 Since sending the paper out, the Executive Management Board had proposed a further amendment to the schedule of delegations that had been endorsed by postal action as follows:

- i. Delegate from Committee to the Executive Management Board approval of *contracts* over £300k. The requirement for Committee approval for *projects* over £300k remains.

4.3 The Committee endorsed this further change.

5. JNCC's role in environmental economics (JNCC 07 P12)

- 5.1 Mr Yeo introduced the workshop on JNCC's role in environmental economics. He noted that it was timely to discuss this area with Committee, as JNCC's environmental economics work programme had now been established for over 18 months. Mr Yeo commented that the JNCC vision and strategy place the organisation's work firmly in the context of sustainable development, making it necessary to link environmental with social and economic factors.
- 5.2 Ms McKenzie gave Committee a presentation on JNCC's role in environmental economics. The objectives of the presentation were:
- i. to raise Committee's awareness and understanding of the role of environmental economics in nature conservation;
 - ii. to promote discussion of priorities for JNCC's environmental economics work.
- 5.3 In a short session following the presentation, the following points were raised:
- i. the different languages used by economists and natural scientists create challenges for connecting across these disciplines. Building interdisciplinary communities that are comfortable conversing across different disciplines should be seen as a long-term goal;
 - ii. a key challenge is gaining an understanding of the science required for economic models. In this regard, JNCC needs to connect with research institutes and learn from case studies in the UK Overseas Territories, which will highlight the limitations of existing models, data and scientific understanding;
 - iii. economics has limitations in dealing with intrinsic value due to the anthropocentric nature of the discipline. The intrinsic value of the environment is nevertheless important.
- 5.4 In discussion of priorities for JNCC's work programme, the following points were raised:
- i. there was strong support for JNCC's work on environmental economics, and awareness of the need to do more in this area in a number of the country agencies;
 - ii. there is potential for JNCC and the country agencies to play a leadership role in certain aspects of environmental economics;

- iii. given limited capacity and resources, it will be essential for JNCC and the country agencies to collaborate in their environmental economics work programmes to determine priorities, potential synergies and areas for joint working. The JNCC environmental economics programme also needs to engage with the wider community, to provide a catalyst for action by, and in partnership with, other organisations;
- iv. the environmental economics work of JNCC and the country agencies would benefit from an overall strategic framework;
- v. JNCC should take account of the need for operational, tactical and strategic economics (as advocated in the Natural England Framework for Science, Research and Evidence);
- vi. JNCC has a role to play in operational science and economics, particularly in the UK Overseas Territories. Potential areas for tactical economics include modelling ecosystem services and environmental valuation. Strategic economics could include explorations of new and emerging areas;
- vii. JNCC must be clear about its role in relation to, and work closely with, research institutes. There are opportunities for JNCC to influence the role of environmental economics in research programmes, such as the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU). JNCC should also engage with UK academia, particularly in the area of philosophy, as a partner discipline to economics;
- viii. there is a need to examine the economics of environmental risks. JNCC should engage with investment managers and the insurance industry in this area;
- ix. JNCC would benefit from connecting with the farming community, to explore the value of non-market goods and services provided by agriculture. Economists in the National Farmer's Union are potential partners;
- x. the environmental economics programme should acknowledge the risks arising from gaps in the science, but act now to provide policy advice based on the best existing scientific understanding;
- xi. there is a need to explore the drivers of market-based instruments;
- xii. there are parallels between the environmental and artistic sectors, which may help to explore how people value aesthetics;

- xiii. economic models need to account for price volatility, and explore the implications of using different time frames in analysis;
- xiv. research on the use of discount rates in the area of biodiversity may not be an area for JNCC to lead on, due to the likely controversy and technical nature of this area. The biodiversity community does, however, need to understand and consider issues arising around discount rates;
- xv. JNCC's environmental economics work should connect with business and industry and should engage with the new Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform;
- xvi. developing indicators to move 'beyond' GDP is important. It is inappropriate for JNCC to lead in this area. JNCC should have a watching brief, and ensure that sufficient attention is paid to biodiversity considerations;
- xvii. UNEP-WCMC is wrestling with similar challenges in dealing with environmental economics. It will be important in this, as in other relevant work areas, for JNCC and UNEP-WCMC to work closely and collaboratively;
- xviii. a potential focus for collaboration with the country agencies on environmental economics is to assess the benefits of country policy priorities for ecosystem and land management;
- xix. the marine environment should be fully incorporated within JNCC's environmental economics programme.

5.5 Chairman thanked Ms McKenzie for a clear and informative presentation.

6. JNCC position statement on transport biofuels and biodiversity (JNCC 07 P13)

- 6.1 Mr Yeo introduced the draft position statement. He explained that it was intended that this would form the core of JNCC's advice to Government and others on the issue.
- 6.2 In discussion the following points were made:
 - i. the statement needs to be set in the context of JNCC's position on wider energy issues¹;

¹ It is intended to prepare a JNCC position statement on energy and nature conservation for discussion by the Joint Committee in March 2008.

- ii. the statement should acknowledge the potential benefits for biodiversity associated with certain forms of biofuel production, such as extensive cereal production;
 - iii. the market for first generation biofuels is already well established, but there are opportunities to influence the development and implementation of second generation technologies;
 - iv. the statement should advocate the use of locally grown biological materials for processing into biofuels as this would help to minimise transportation emissions;
 - v. the statement should be checked to ensure that the terms ‘biofuel’ and ‘biomass’ are used consistently and appropriately.
- 6.3 Mr Jones noted that the JNCC position statement would be considered by CCW’s Council in October. Dr Blakiston Houston noted that CNCC’s working groups on agri-environment and renewable energy had not yet had the opportunity to discuss the statement.
- 6.4 **Subject to the comments summarised in 6.2 and any further comments arising from the discussions noted in 6.3, the Committee endorsed the position statement.**

7. **The 2010 biodiversity targets – definition, measuring progress and identifying successor targets (JNCC 07 P11)**

- 7.1 Dr Vincent explained that the paper was presented in response to the uncertainty expressed by the Committee at its March 2007 meeting about the meaning of the 2010 biodiversity target(s) and the nature of any successor targets in Europe and globally. The paper summarises the background to the 2010 biodiversity target (s) and in paragraphs 2.9 and 2.10 recommends a practical interpretation which could be adopted by the United Kingdom (UK). The paper describes the UK’s progress towards meeting the targets and the means of assessment, including the use of the UK’s Biodiversity Indicators.
- 7.2 In discussing the interpretation of halting the decline in biodiversity set out in paragraphs 2.9 and 2.10 of the paper, the following points were raised:
- i. attempting to define biodiversity in relation to the 2010 targets was welcomed and the principles adopted were the right ones. 2.10 logically assumes that 2010 will be a benchmark for change. The annex to the paper flags up losses, but does not mention the political debate on recovery or acceptance of losses;
 - ii. the implication of potentially not meeting the 2010 target on the millennium development goals was a relevant consideration;

- iii. it was realistic to mainly focus on the habitat and species level, however, the paper should include reference to ecosystem approaches and genetic levels. The paper could consider also the targets under the EU action plan. Greg Mudge from SNH could supply this information;
- iv. Natural England gave their support for 2.9 and 2.10 and made reference to the operational obligations of producing 'Biodiversity indicators in your pocket'. The JNCC would continue to support and collaborate with Defra on this publication, although it underplayed what it was possible to report on. The paper should include reference to the fact that more can be done than the booklet implies;
- v. the extent, quantity and distribution of species will change. The paper should include reference to this and ensure that dynamic is built into the reporting; and
- vi. halting biodiversity loss was a moving conveyor belt and climate change might explain why we will not meet the 2010 target. The paper should make reference to climate change.

7.3 In discussing the suggestions for successor targets, the following points were raised:

- i. there were a number of implications for setting future targets, and the political currency for setting targets generally. In funding biodiversity conservation, consideration should be given to potentially failing to meet the 2010 target (s);
- ii. in setting targets for the UK Biodiversity Standing Committee, the Countryside Council for Wales had found it useful to choose indicators from datasets that go back a number of years. With this in mind, in future target setting, it would be useful to use the 2010 target as a baseline.
- iii. molecular technology and research on evolution was now making it possible to look at the level of diversity of subspecies. Up to now, micro-organisms have largely been ignored, but for future indicators, micro-organisms on land and in the sea should be included, particularly as a vast number of species were unicellular;
- iv. the philosophical approach to further biodiversity loss was welcomed and should be carried through to future target setting;
- v. in setting targets for looking after biodiversity in the future, consideration should be given to helping species move and to accommodating new species from the continent.

7.4 The Committee:

- i. endorsed the interpretation of halting the decline in biodiversity set out in paragraphs 2.9 ad 2.10 and subject to the incorporation of the amendments recommended in discussion, agreed the paper be used as a working tool for the purpose of JNCC's advice to Government;**

8. A UK vision and strategy for nature conservation (JNCC 07 P09)

8.1 The Chairman explained that the paper encapsulates the Vision Working Group's work to develop desired long-term outcomes for nature conservation, and an overall strategy for delivery. The Chairman explained, that because nature conservation is a devolved matter, the JNCC can only advise. It is up to the respective country Governments to determine whether, and how, JNCC's advice should be taken forward. The introductory paragraphs of the paper reflect the sensitivity that may arise from this issue.

8.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. the Vision Working Group did not have an earth sciences representative. It was agreed that Professor Doyle would liaise with Dr Vincent to make changes to the vision to accommodate earth science points;
- iii. care was needed to avoid giving the impression that JNCC was telling Governments what they should be doing, from a UK perspective;
- iv. point 2.1 Box 1, refers to the UK Government's vision. Box 1 was intended to illustrate how the JNCC's vision fits with the government's developing vision for nature conservation. However, the use of the words UK Government, suggests that it has been agreed by the devolved administrations. A mechanism for agreeing the vision with the devolved administrations has not been developed and there are currently no formal sign-off procedures. To avoid mis-representation, it was agreed that point 2.1 would be re-worded, in consultation with Professor Warren, to clarify Defra's current position, which is that they are in the process of developing a UK vision for the devolved administrations to comment on. It was further agreed that the wording used on the Defra website would be cross referenced to any changes in the paper. It was suggested that Box 2 be moved to before Box 1 after these changes are made;
- v. some clarity was required as to whether the vision was intended to be a Defra or JNCC document;
- vi. targets should be aspirational and be up to date, as pressures on the land have changed since 2004 with demographic change, a change in lifestyles in developing countries and intensification of land use;

- 8.3 **The Committee approved the paper, subject to amendments, as the basis for the consultation referred to under 5 (i) of the paper. A paper on the consultation process, would be presented to the Committee in December.**
- 9. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species: recent developments and future direction (JNCC 07 D08)**
- 9.1 Dr Fleming explained that the paper provided a report on the outcome of the 14th Conference of the Parties to CITES earlier this year in the Netherlands. It also provided the Committee with an outline of some of the key issues concerning wildlife trade that frequently polarise debate within CITES, and suggested priorities for JNCC's future role.
- 9.2 In discussion, the following points were raised:
- i. Committee members were very supportive of JNCC's work in support of CITES;
 - ii. important areas for JNCC's future work should include:
 - supporting CITES implementation in the Overseas Territories, especially capacity building;
 - considering the role of CITES in regulating trade in fish species;
 - ensuring that Government provides sufficient resources to fulfil the role of Scientific Authority for animals;
 - helping to promote agreed positions in advance of the 15th Conference of the Parties.
- 9.3 The Committee endorsed the priorities for JNCC's future involvement in CITES, subject to the comments in 9.2.ii.**
- 10. Determining which chemicals may have significant impacts on biodiversity (JNCC 07 N08)**
- 10.1 **Committee noted the paper.**
- 11. Any other business**
- 11.1 A paper on proposed dates for the Joint Committee and the Company Board was tabled. Members were asked to confirm their acceptance of the dates by contacting June Swift by 12 October. Members were informed that, at this stage, dates were still negotiable.
- 11.2 The Chairman commented on the quality and superb presentation of papers. He was however concerned that insufficient time was given to discussion of some papers. He asked that careful consideration be given to future agendas to ensure

that sufficient time is given to each item. Chairman asked that Mr Bridgewater give this matter due consideration.

CLOSED SESSION

The minutes of the following items are contained in a confidential addendum

Decision papers

12. **Recent political changes and the implications for JNCC (In confidence) (JNCC 07 P08)**
13. **Review of Schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981: recent developments (In confidence) (JNCC 07 P10)**

Discussion paper

14. **EC Habitats Directive – implications of establishing conservation status (In confidence) (JNCC 07 D09)**