

JNCC NGO Forum – Note of meeting, 11 November 2013

Attendees

Lisa Bainbridge – Wales Environment Link
Peter Bridgewater – JNCC (Chair)
Sue Christie – Northern Ireland Environment Link
Andy Clements – BTO
Andrew Farmer – IEEP
Tony Gent – ARC
David Gibbons – RSPB
Karen Haysom – Bat Conservation Trust
Stephen Hinchley – Wildlife Trusts
Jane Houldsworth - BSBI
Elaine King – Wildlife and Countryside Link
Mellissa Moore – Marine Conservation Society
Marina Pacheco – Mammal Society
Paul Rose - JNCC
Matt Shardlow – Buglife
Marcus Yeo – JNCC

Apologies

Debbie Payne – WWT
Craig Macadam – Buglife and Scottish Environment Link (partial attendance through failed telecon)

1. Setting the scene

- 1.1. JNCC Chair Peter Bridgewater introduced the meeting and JNCC Chief Executive Marcus Yeo outlined the outcomes of JNCC's recent Triennial Review.
- 1.2. Peter confirmed that it was his intention to instigate regular meetings between the Joint Committee (JNCC's non-executive board) and NGOs but that it would fall to the next Chair of JNCC to move this along as it wasn't possible to do much before Peter's last meeting in Spring 2014.
- 1.3. There followed a round of comments from NGO participants on areas where JNCC could improve partnership working with NGOs and some of the things that were working well. The major points raised by NGOs were as follows:
 - i. We need to increase monitoring performance across the board in line with the challenge from Ian Boyd (Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser). Scientific expertise remains critical. JNCC's continuing focus on long-term monitoring was supported.
 - ii. It is important we all understand the role we want ecosystem services and natural capital to play, and work to use them as strengths in our conservation efforts.
 - iii. Offshore fisheries work and additional marine conservation measures should be high priorities for JNCC.
 - iv. JNCC's primary focus has shifted too far towards government and industry. It needs to swing back towards core nature conservation priorities.
 - v. The funding for nature conservation is changing and this requires new and stronger JNCC/NGO relationships, e.g. on citizen science.

- vi. In its work on marine protected areas, JNCC needs to look equally to all OSPAR principles not just ecological coherence.
- vii. Work on development pressures is very important.
- viii. JNCC's evidence and advice is effective and delivered for minimal cost.
- ix. The overarching UK perspective provided by JNCC is highly valued. This includes driving science/policy coordination.
- x. Living landscapes and living seas might be areas in which NGOs can work with JNCC to promote thought leadership.
- xi. JNCC needs to try and maintain its neutral strategic European role in light of imminent changes on the horizon.
- xii. Some NGOs have found it difficult to engage with JNCC on NBN and Overseas Territories work.
- xiii. At present there is no open dialogue between some NGOs and JNCC.
- xiv. Sometimes JNCC needs to make it clear what it thinks.
- xv. NGOs are keen to work directly with JNCC officers on specific issues.

AP1: All to inform Paul Rose of any specific issues those NGOs would like to raise with JNCC.

- 1.4. Marcus Yeo responded that these comments were broadly what he expected and that there were many opportunities to improve our working together. There were also always going to be occasions when we disagree.

AP2: JNCC to notify NGO forum when key documents (e.g. Joint Committee papers) become available.

2. How the forum should operate

2.1. The meeting agreed:

- i. Two meetings a year plus one with Joint Committee.
- ii. Chairmanship/facilitation to circulate around the forum.
- iii. Flexible membership to accommodate expertise on specific issues.
- iv. Consideration will be given to inviting key individuals to meetings, e.g. Ian Boyd.
- v. A non-minuted section of the agenda should be an option.
- vi. NGO views will be presented openly to the Joint Committee and differences of opinion will be acknowledged.
- vii. The forum should not detract in any way from officer level interaction between NGO and JNCC staff.

2.2. The meeting then discussed topics that we might talk about together and share information between meetings. The forum favoured a workshop style discussion of one or two of these strategic issues each meeting: Suggestions included:

- i. Evidence and science provision.
- ii. Protected areas.
- iii. Species conservation and Red Lists.
- iv. Energy policies.
- v. Landscape-scale conservation (including marine equivalents).
- vi. European/international work – key science issues.
- vii. Taking a proactive look at the future challenges we might be facing.

AP3: JNCC to arrange next meeting at a time to best fit the proposed mode of operation (before March 2014).

3. Consideration of the Joint Committee discussion paper on protected areas

3.1. Some initial views were presented. The key points from NGOs were:

- i. The paper is muddled between the purpose of protected areas and the underpinning science. It addresses neither adequately.
- ii. Designations are not for ecosystem services.
- iii. Treatment of the Ecosystem Approach comes too late in the paper and doesn't recognise the multiple interpretations of the term.
- iv. The contrast between England and Scotland positions is very marked.
- v. The strength (inflexibility) of the Habitats Directive is strongly welcomed.
- vi. Assessing protected area networks under climate change scenarios is important.
- vii. Some paragraphs late on in the paper appear to promote yet more compromise in the face of development which is not acceptable.
- viii. The principles of the Ecosystem Approach stress looking after the environment.
- ix. The issues beneath the bird trends statistics on SPAs were unclear. A recent paper in Science shows the Birds Directive has generally been successful in protecting bird populations.
- x. The definition of designations is too wide. AONBs do not protect biodiversity.
- xi. More work is needed on success criteria for protected areas.
- xii. We need to better understand the options and benefits around using designations flexibly.

AP4. All to send written comments to Marcus Yeo by Monday 18 November. These will be presented to Joint Committee.