

A policy – delivery partnership: Defra, the Devolved Administrations and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

The purpose of this document

This document is complementary to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)'s Accountability Framework Document, Management Statement, and Financial Memorandum (the formal governance documents). Those arrangements are summarised in the chart at Annex 1.

The policy-delivery partnership

- focuses on clarifying roles, relationships, ways of working and partnership values which do not find an easy home in the Management Statement or the Accountability Framework Document;
- is agreed between the Defra sponsor Minister on behalf of the 4 sponsoring administrations (Defra, Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Executive) and the Chairman of the Joint Committee; and
- is a public document.

It does not

- repeat formal material on governance and accountabilities,
- seek to interpret or re-interpret the statutory role or responsibilities of the JNCC as set out in the founding legislation; or
- amend or re-interpret the frameworks and procedures prescribed by the formal governance documents

Aim of the partnership

The 4 sponsoring administrations' aims are much broader than those of JNCC's and they will all have access to other advice and analysis across the breadth of those responsibilities, so the aim of the partnership is defined in terms of JNCC's purpose as set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006:

For the purposes of nature conservation, and fostering understanding of nature conservation:- .

(a) providing advice on the development and implementation of policies for or affecting any nature conservation matter which

i) arises throughout the UK and raises issues common to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland ,

ii) arises in one or more (but not all) of those places and affects the interests of the United Kingdom as a whole, or

iii) arises outside the United Kingdom

(b) providing advice to any persons and disseminating knowledge about any such matter,

(c) establishing common standards throughout the United Kingdom for the monitoring of nature conservation and for research into nature conservation and the analysis of the resulting information,

(d) commissioning or supporting, whether by financial means or otherwise, research into such matters.

Achieving this purpose requires the coordinated input of the four UK conservation bodies, Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, all of whom have direct relationships with their respective administrations.

Part of JNCC's role is to establish a common position with the UK conservation bodies in relation to nature conservation matters and they should always act through or in cooperation with JNCC on these matters, reflecting the position agreed by the Joint Committee or by Defra in consultation with the Devolved Administrations.

In order to carry out its role effectively, JNCC will need to liaise with a wide range of government bodies including other Departments of the UK Government and the Devolved administrations and their agencies.

Direction of travel

There is increasing pressure on resources and a drive to greater efficiency in all 4 administrations though each has its own individual approach. However, greater clarity as to roles and responsibilities of sponsored bodies forms part of the approach of each as does avoiding unnecessary overlaps in work programmes between administrations, the UK conservation bodies and the JNCC.

Roles in a nutshell

- Defra, the devolved administrations and JNCC share evidence, understanding and the need for policy development;
- Ministers, including those in the devolved administrations, make political decisions on policies and priorities and create the legislative and policy environment with advice from JNCC;
- JNCC proposes how to deliver its statutory purpose effectively and efficiently, taking into account Ministerial priorities; Ministers approve and resource;
- JNCC implements;
- JNCC reports on performance in a way which meets both its own needs and those of the 4 sponsoring administrations;

- Defra, the devolved administrations and JNCC jointly monitor and evaluate implementation to feed into new policy and better delivery of JNCC's functions.

Some shared values for the policy – delivery relationship

The list below is not comprehensive but is indicative of the behaviours in a mature, open and truly collaborative approach to working as advocated by this agreement :-

- ***involve the other partner early*** and remember that a 5 min 'phone call can convey much more relevant information than being copied into 50 emails.
- ***no surprises*** especially on matters which may get media attention.
- ***think about roles and accountabilities*** and escalate issues for resolution if they are unclear.
- ***share data and analysis***
- ***capture good practice in handling issues and agree it for the future*** because there is no substitute for experience.
- ***... but don't rely too much on process*** because the quality of the human relationships will be more important than written agreements
- ***be active*** in improving understanding, inviting partner staff to seminars, site visits, away days etc.
- ***be honest*** Tell the other partner when it is not working for you, don't moan behind their back.
- ***review***. Find time to sit down together at regular intervals and review how it is going.
- ***respect*** the institutional, procedural and cultural differences in the 4 administrations and the differing operational requirements that these generate

Characterising the difference in roles

The following is not comprehensive (it does not list every way in which the aims of the partnership can be achieved) and it is not exclusive (the appearance of an item on one side does not imply that the other side has no role at all in it). Its purpose is to characterise the difference in the roles of the 4 sponsoring administrations and JNCC by focusing on the most important areas.

The table does not attempt to tease out the roles of JNCC and the 4 UK conservation bodies in relation to nature conservation issues but recognises that their roles are interlinked and the best outcomes can only be achieved by collaborative working.

The table and the following text also does not attempt to define those areas where Defra leads on policy because the area falls within the definition of reserved matters under the devolution settlement and other matters where the devolved administrations will jointly lead policy with Defra. Neither does it set out what the procedures should be for determining the UK policy position on a particular topic, recognising that there will be a wide variety of approaches which will be dependant on the policy area and/or circumstances. Rather it stresses a collaborative and consultative approach tailored to the specific circumstances that includes all those with an interest.

Defra and the devolved administrations ***JNCC***

Legislation

Enact and maintain the primary and secondary legislative framework needed to secure aims of partnership

Periodically review and advise on need for changes.
Contribute to the legislative processes with evidence and advice.

Outcomes, policies and resources

Involve JNCC at the earliest stages of strategic policy development

Provide impartial analysis of strategic policy options.

Make timely political decisions on priorities

Advise on the need for change and provide evidence on the need for and use of resources.

Express priorities clearly and consistently

Develop and communicate tactical (or operational) policies.

Anticipate need for change

Demonstrate outstanding value for money

Secure funding and make firm three year settlements

Secure additional resources from other sources such as NGOs, OGDs and the EU, where appropriate and cost-effective to do so

Advocate the need for action by Government and the Devolved Administrations through policies and programmes which support the aims of the partnership

Influence through others

Secure support in the policies and programmes of other statutory bodies

Work with business, the voluntary and statutory sectors, EU institutions and multilateral environmental agreements to achieve the aims of the partnership

Defra and the devolved administrations

Secure support in the policies and programmes of the EU and other international institutions

Evidence and innovation

Develop and share the evidence base

Share the interpretation of evidence, wherever possible

Scan horizon to inform policy evolution

Evaluate existing policies in close partnership (and with customers and stakeholders)

Ensure that data on the natural environment is publicly available in principal repositories such as ONS

Implementation

Monitor delivery performance to discharge Ministers' accountability

Challenge JNCC to deliver improved value for money

JNCC

Champion the natural environment in the UK and internationally and inspire wider support for the aims of the partnership

Develop and share the evidence base

Share the interpretation of evidence, wherever possible

Challenge Government, the Devolved Administrations and other stakeholders with long term and innovative thinking

Evaluate existing policies in close partnership with Defra, OGDs and the devolved administrations (and customers and stakeholders)

Advise Defra, OGDs and the devolved administrations on the likely success and value for money of different policies

Secure continuous improvement through innovation

Discharge its functions and influence in the most effective way to achieve the objectives and targets set out in the agreed corporate plan.

Supply timely and regular information to Defra and the Devolved Administrations on performance and give early warning of problems

Responsibilities in more detail, linked to the policy cycle

In addition to expressing the roles of Defra, the Devolved Administrations and JNCC, this section gives more information about the respective roles of the lead policy divisions in Defra and the Devolved Administrations and the sponsor divisions. The Defra sponsor team, by agreement with the other sponsoring administrations, takes the day to day lead on sponsorship of JNCC.

There are several references here to JNCC's corporate plan. In accordance with Treasury best practice, JNCC normally has a three year corporate plan, updated every other year. The first year of the plan is worked up in more detail to form a business plan, including key performance indicators. However it is a single document referred to simply as the "corporate plan".

Horizon scanning

Both lead policy divisions in all 4 administrations and JNCC need to undertake horizon scanning. This is a key area where the different perspective of the Joint Committee itself will add value and where it has a role to constructively challenge Government. However unnecessary duplication and overlap should be avoided by sharing early thinking on horizon scanning projects, as well as all results.

Lead policy divisions in all 4 administrations need to maintain sufficient knowledge and understanding of developments in their policy areas to support their Ministers and act as an "intelligent customer" for JNCC.

Sponsor divisions are not knowledgeable on all aspects of JNCC's work and rely on advice and support from lead policy divisions in their own administrations. However they will take an overview in this area and ask questions about coherence and value for money.

Setting direction, strategic aims, objectives, outcomes, prioritisation

The principal dialogue in these areas takes place every year, in the context of JNCC's corporate/business planning process at the autumn meeting of the JNCC Sponsors' Group (which includes representatives of all 4 sponsor administrations and the 4 UK conservation bodies). However analysis of new policy options and changes to priorities can take place at any time. The annual discussions at the JNCC Sponsors' Group meetings fulfil the statutory consultation requirements of Para 14(2) of Schedule 4 to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

JNCC's work contributes to a range of Defra, OGD and devolved administrations' targets and programmes. Defra and the devolved administrations will provide JNCC with opportunities to contribute to setting their strategic priorities in the same way as happens for other sponsored bodies.

The sponsor division in Defra is responsible for coordinating and facilitating formal communication, especially during corporate plan review, since this is when Defra, the devolved administrations and JNCC need structured contact across a wide front. However, it is recognised that JNCC will need to have bilateral discussions with the devolved administrations, UK conservation bodies, Defra policy teams and other Government Departments as well. Such bilateral discussions are especially important in the context of the preparation of JNCC's corporate plan. The Defra sponsor division's role is to keep out of the way of such bilateral relations unless it can help in the resolution of problems or would support the process.

Defra officials and their counterparts in the devolved administrations are responsible for advising their respective Ministers on strategic policy options and directions, taking account of JNCC's advice on effectiveness and deliverability. Lead policy division staff,

both in Defra and the Devolved Administrations, will work with JNCC and, where appropriate, the UK conservation bodies to ensure that strategic policies are designed so that they can be delivered cost effectively. This relationship will normally be between individual policy lead divisions and the lead JNCC team. The lead JNCC team will be responsible for ensuring any wider consultation necessary within its organisation and, if appropriate, with the UK conservation bodies, to ensure a coherent JNCC view; the Defra and devolved administration lead policy divisions, with the assistance of their colleagues in sponsor divisions if necessary, will be responsible for any wider consultation within Defra and the devolved administrations.

There will be a range of contexts in which JNCC undertakes analytical and advisory work. There will be differences, for example, between:

- advice to Defra, the devolved administrations and other departments on the impact and effectiveness of options during policy development
- advocacy of JNCC's priorities to the public and stakeholders
- challenge to Government and others on their performance in conserving and enhancing nature conservation interests

All parties need to understand which mode any communication is in. The diversity of transactions rules out the use of Chinese Walls. Success in this area will rely largely on all Defra, devolved administration and JNCC staff being alert to the issue and raising it in their day to day dealings when appropriate. JNCC has a particular responsibility to ensure that requests for scientific advice are not coloured by its 'advocacy' activities.

JNCC is one of Government's principal experts on nature conservation issues. Ministers and officials of all 4 sponsoring administrations need to have confidence in its impartial and professional advice when developing policy options.

Where new policy options have a strategic impact on the future shape or nature of JNCC's business or its resource requirements, the lead policy division should involve the Defra sponsor division at an early stage and engage JNCC in a timely manner.

Lead policy divisions in all 4 administrations are charged with reflecting JNCC's views on policy, and the best way to deliver it, in the advice they give to their Ministers. Sponsor divisions have a similar role in relation to JNCC's corporate affairs. Officials in the 4 administrations are responsible for ensuring that JNCC's views, and especially their advice on effectiveness and delivery, are fairly represented to their Ministers. Where there are differences of opinion or emphasis which cannot be resolved, lead policy divisions will not draft around the problem but will set out the differences fairly. Where advice originates from JNCC or where a decision relies heavily on that advice, the resulting submission will be shared with JNCC.

JNCC has the right to advise Ministers directly, irrespective of the position of officials. However it is hoped that following the practice set out above will make that a relatively rare occurrence as it is wasteful of resources and does not facilitate good Ministerial decision making by seeking to force Ministers to choose between the advice of officials and the advice of JNCC.

JNCC officers will ensure that Defra and devolved administration officials are involved at the earliest stage of considering changes which might affect its principal functions. The

views of officials – and, if necessary, of Ministers – will be made known to Joint Committee members before their consideration of such issues.

In relation to any promotional and advocacy activity by JNCC, JNCC officers will keep Defra and devolved administration officials sufficiently well informed to avoid surprises. This should include routine advance warning of announcements and publication of reports and/or data which could result in media comment or coverage, either locally or nationally. Staff in the UK conservation bodies and the 4 administrations will keep JNCC informed of any communications activities undertaken by their respective organisations that relate to JNCC's work.

It is the responsibility of both the lead policy divisions and JNCC to ensure that the financial implications of advice to Ministers and the Joint Committee are fully understood and to set out the evidence on which the implications are based.

There is a strong presumption against any ring fencing within JNCC's budget. Sponsor divisions in all the sponsoring administrations have a key role in facilitating communication between lead policy divisions and JNCC to ensure that resources match aspirations at the time of corporate plan making. JNCC has a responsibility to advise the 4 sponsoring administrations in advance if a major reallocation of resources is to be made in year. However, the split of resources in the 'funding formula' between those programmes which Defra funds exclusively and those funded jointly by all 4 administrations (in the case of Scotland, England and Wales via their country conservation body) should be regarded as the equivalent of a ring fence.

There are two areas which need the attention of lead policy divisions:

- for major new policy proposals, the lead policy division is responsible for advising Ministers, with associated advice from JNCC if they are relevant to JNCC's purpose and functions. As options are developed, JNCC will offer advice on the effectiveness and impact of specific proposals and on the capacity of the organisation to deliver.
- advice to Ministers on the corporate plan being prepared by JNCC. This will contain continuing programmes and there will be scope for some growth/contraction to reflect evolving priorities. To facilitate this, sponsor divisions and the UK conservation bodies will be responsible for informing JNCC at an early stage of their strategic outcomes and targets. The Defra Sponsor division will coordinate Defra lead policy divisions' advice on the plan and seek input from their counterparts in the devolved administrations who, in turn will co-ordinate input from their own policy colleagues. As set out above, JNCC is encouraged to discuss corporate plan requirements at an early stage with the Devolved Administrations.

JNCC's corporate plan will be based on JNCC's strategic outcomes and show its contribution to the 4 sponsoring administrations' strategic outcomes and targets, including JNCC's contribution to the outcomes and targets of the 4 UK conservation bodies, and the targets of other departments. The plan describes how JNCC will deliver its objectives in the short to medium term. There needs to be a close relationship between lead policy divisions' business plans and JNCC's corporate plan so that end-to-end delivery of strategic outcomes is planned and monitored.

Delivery – planning, targets, implementation

Delivery is the responsibility of JNCC. This includes day-to-day monitoring of delivery of policies and continuous improvement activity in performance and process. Delivery should be seen as a generic term which covers all the JNCC operational activities to meet its strategic outcomes and targets including its advisory roles.

Implementation of a strategic policy will be most effective if it is conducted on the basis of a clear understanding of accountabilities. This will vary according to the nature of the programme.

It is important that key performance indicators are agreed early as part of the corporate plan. The sponsor divisions will facilitate with the Defra Sponsor division co-ordinating, but lead policy divisions should ensure that their discussions with JNCC about delivery extend to the measurement of performance. Shared performance data is a critical feature of a good policy – delivery partnership.

Part of JNCC's 'delivery' is measured in changes to the policies and programmes of others through influence and or advice. Defra, the devolved administrations along with other Government departments, will sometimes be the focus of JNCC's advocacy. This core work needs to be covered adequately in the corporate plan and framework for performance management to allow lead policy divisions to identify opportunities for coordinated activity.

Appraisal, review, feedback and accountability

In order to inform both the setting of targets and wider strategy development, the Defra sponsor division needs to understand the performance management framework within JNCC. JNCC will share its performance information with the Defra sponsor division, who will share the relevant parts with lead policy divisions and counterparts in the devolved administrations. Decisions on in-year performance management are solely for JNCC, but the sponsor divisions in all 4 administrations, advised by lead policy divisions, retain a stewardship role on performance. By monitoring and challenging JNCC's performance management activity, normally on a formal, quarterly basis, the sponsor divisions provide their own Management Boards and Ministers with an assurance that JNCC is delivering effectively and efficiently.

If the sponsor divisions believe that JNCC is not delivering the agreed corporate plan, and this cannot be resolved successfully, they have a responsibility to draw this to the attention of Ministers. But the sponsor divisions have no decision making authority or accountability for how JNCC delivers the corporate plan. The sponsor divisions would normally seek to address such issues by recommending modification to the target structure or levels for the future, during corporate plan discussions.

The sponsor divisions' responsibilities here, in discussion with lead policy divisions, is to identify what is working well and where the current suite of strategy and associated delivery mechanisms is not producing satisfactory outcomes for Defra, the devolved administrations and other Government departments (particularly in relation to delivery of strategic targets).

There is an equal need for both lead policy divisions and JNCC to evaluate the success of policies and programmes and feed it back into policy development and better delivery. Appraisal and evaluation will be progressed in a coordinated programme with major policy evaluations run as joint projects.

It is recognised that there may be differences of opinion between Defra and other sponsoring administrations on the evaluation of JNCC's performance. Any such differences will be discussed between officials, and if necessary Ministers, in order to provide JNCC with a co-ordinated and agreed response on behalf of Government.

EU and International relationships

JNCC has a legitimate interest in international and European matters that are relevant to its statutory remit. JNCC will, therefore, wish to be involved in influencing the shape of those policies for the future, whether it is the formulation of a UK negotiating position or through direct contact with international or European institutions. In many instances, Government itself will look to JNCC to actively support Government's own position and views in its contacts with these bodies either through the provision of impartial scientific advice or through advocacy with its network of contacts.

However, JNCC's status and its founding legislation mean that:

- JNCC should not imply that it represents the UK Government or Defra;
- JNCC should not seek to undermine the UK Government's position in EU or international negotiations;
- even when there are not active negotiations taking place, JNCC should be careful not to damage the UK's position when advocating a policy approach to EU or international organisations that is inconsistent with the Government's.

It follows that JNCC will, in this area, need to liaise closely with a wide range of other Government Departments and their agencies, including those of the Devolved Administrations and Northern Ireland Office.

In relation to international and UK wide nature conservation functions, the statutory position is that Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside can only exercise them through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. It therefore follows that on international and UK wide nature conservation, JNCC may need to establish a common position with the UK conservation bodies and the UK conservation bodies should always act through or in co-operation with JNCC, fully reflecting the position agreed by the Joint Committee or by Defra in consultation with the three devolved administrations.

There will be occasions when JNCC and Defra policy leads will not agree on the way forward. Where discussion at a domestic level fails to reconcile differences, JNCC should inform the policy lead in advance of any European or international events or meetings at which it will be unable to actively support official UK policy. Similarly, policy leads in Government Departments will be expected to keep JNCC apprised of the developing UK policy line or negotiating position.

Ministers' Correspondence and PQ's

Handling protocols are set out in detail at Annex 4

Evidence to Committees and Consultation Responses

JNCC will often be invited to submit evidence to Parliamentary Select Committees, their EU equivalents or respond to consultations initiated by Government Departments, including Defra. JNCC should provide copies of such documents to the JNCC Sponsor Division in Defra. Where JNCC knows of other policy leads in Defra with an interest, they should be copied directly, although the Defra sponsor team will also consider copying to others.

JNCC will also adopt a similar approach to requests to give evidence to committees of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and Northern Ireland Assembly and consultations initiated by the 3 devolved administrations by copying evidence or response to the relevant sponsor divisions.

Complaints

Any complaints to the four administrations from the public about JNCC will be referred initially to JNCC's Managing Director and will be handled through JNCC's own complaints procedures. If a complainant is not satisfied and approaches Defra or the devolved administrations after exhausting all the JNCC's complaints procedures, the relevant sponsor division will consult with JNCC before advising Ministers. Where a complaint is made to one of the sponsor divisions in the Devolved Administrations, it will liaise with the Defra sponsor division as lead sponsor on the preparation of advice to Ministers.

Invitations/events

JNCC may seek the involvement of UK or Devolved Ministers in events or invite them to visit JNCC offices or projects. In some cases these will be organised in conjunction with policy leads in the relevant administration and in England may form part of a Government Office for the Eastern Region organised programme of events. The appropriate sponsor division should be copied in any such approach to Ministers and should be provided with a copy of the draft programme.

Classified material

JNCC can be sent Restricted material when it is relevant to its purpose. Officials must make sure that it is clearly marked as such. JNCC must make sure that all staff likely to receive it understand its significance and how to handle it, including in relation to Freedom of Information.

Restricted material should not be incorporated into JNCC documents – such as Committee papers – without the agreement of the relevant sponsor division.

The Chairman and Managing Director of JNCC may receive material of higher classification from, for example, a Private Office. However any lead policy branch contemplating sending higher classification material to a staff member of JNCC should check with their administration's sponsor division.

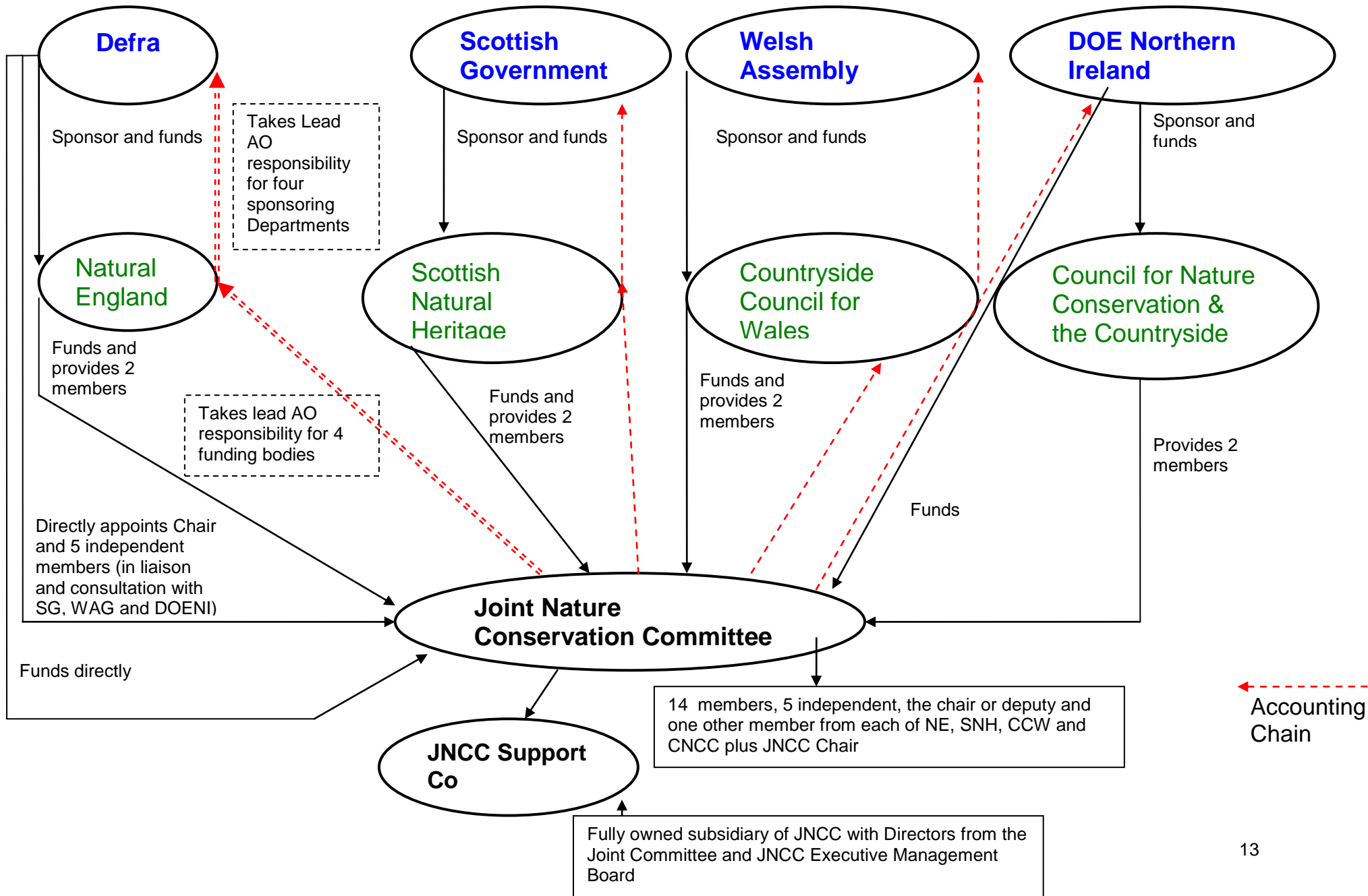
Training and development

One of ways to cultivate good partnership working between the 4 sponsoring administrations, the UK conservation bodies and JNCC would be through joint training and development activities.

This might include formal training events, work experience and secondments which will give all staff who work in the partnership an opportunity to develop their understanding and skills.

Relationship management

In addition to day to day contact, the relationship between the 4 sponsoring administrations will be managed through a structured series of meetings with Ministers and senior staff. It is laid out in annex 3.



Annex 2 : The policy – delivery partnership (from Defra’s Delivery Strategy)

What policy does

- Develop policy advice to Ministers.** Identify desired outcomes, hold the vision, respond to:- stakeholder and customer views, deliverers’ experience, international and EU negotiation, views of other Defra Directorates, OGDs, Devolved Administrations, RDAs and LAs, the evidence base and customer segmentation.
- Consult and brief Ministers,** deal with PQs, Ministers’ correspondence, press releases, speeches on policy issues.
- Commission R&D** in support of policy, assimilation of R&D for basing future policy.
- Construct business cases** for future resourcing.
- Budget management/financial accountability**
- Ensure delivery arrangements are fit for purpose,** promote efficiency and effectiveness, review arrangements at intervals, confirm or terminate.
- Promote and maintain governance arrangements** for delivery agents, monitor performance against agreed outputs.
- Instruct Legal Dept** on legislation and SIs.
- engage stakeholders, understand end-customers, monitor public opinion.**

Partnership

- deliverers inform policy development and decision-making.*
- outcomes and targets agreed with deliverers before publication.*
- policy rationale understood and championed by both.*
- Deliverers empowered to get on with delivery, held to account by monitoring, audit, inspection.*
- strong two-way communication with deliverers reporting back regularly to policy on the achievement of outcomes.*

What delivery does

- Deliver products and services** to direct customers.
- Develop delivery and operational policy** for the agency.
- Develop new schemes,** scheme literature, publicity
- Process design and process improvement for schemes.** Operational guidance, liaison with international partners.
- Compliance, corporate governance, financial and business planning,** accountability for delivery.
- Customer focus:** charter deadlines, service standards, relationships with and feedback from direct customers.
- Advise Ministers on specialist policy areas;** handle PQs, Ministers’ correspondence, speeches, news releases on delivery issues.

Annex 3 JNCC – Defra/Devolved Administration Governance Framework

Defra	JNCC	Meeting schedule	Purpose
Defra Minister	Chair Managing Director	Annual (March/April) Biannual Needs basis	To discuss JNCC's Corporate/Business Plan To review JNCC's performance To provide advice on or discuss particular nature conservation issues
Devolved Ministers	Chair Managing Director	Annual	To review JNCC's strategic direction, performance and discuss any particular nature conservation issues
Defra Director/SRO (Biodiversity Programme)	Managing Director	Biannual Needs basis	To manage the Defra – JNCC relationship To maintain an overview of Defra -JNCC issues
Defra Director/SRO (Marine Programme)	Managing Director Director (s)	Needs basis	To review JNCC's input on marine nature conservation issues
Devolved Administration Directors	Managing Director Director (s)	Annual Needs basis	To manage the DA – JNCC relationship To maintain an overview of DA -JNCC issues
Defra Deputy Director DA Sponsor teams	Managing Director Director (s)	Biannual Sponsor's Group meetings	To develop Corporate Plan, Business Plan and work on agreed areas of collaboration. To review performance. To discuss particular sponsorship issues
Defra Deputy Director	Managing Director Director(s)	Needs basis	To discuss particular Defra – JNCC issues.
Defra Sponsorship Team	Director of Resources and External Affairs Head of Finance	Quarterly	To review expenditure and performance data

Annex 4 - Ministers' Correspondence and PQ's

Parliamentary Questions

Responses to Parliamentary PQs at Westminster are co-ordinated by the Parliamentary Team in the Defra Customer Contact Unit (CCU). CCU will ask JNCC to contribute to all PQs which are relevant to its purpose and also commission input from relevant policy teams within Defra. CCU will approach one central contact within JNCC. All such PQs will be copied, for information, to the JNCC Sponsor Division and JNCC should ensure the sponsor team is copied in on its contributions.

The timetables for response are dictated by the parliamentary timetable and are non negotiable. This timetable will not allow for JNCC to see the final draft reply being submitted to Ministers so it is important that any input is 'quality assured' by JNCC before it submits to the CCU.

Sponsor divisions in the devolved administrations will liaise directly with JNCC where contributions are required for answers to questions to Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland Ministers.

Parliamentary Correspondence

Correspondence from MPs and Peers received by Defra which relates purely to JNCC operational issues will be acknowledged by the CCU and referred to JNCC's Managing Director for reply. In most circumstances it will be appropriate for any reply to be sent by JNCC's Chair or Managing Director. The initial letter and reply should be copied to the lead policy division, the Defra sponsor team and the CCU.

Correspondence from MPs and Peers received by Defra which relates to both policy issues and JNCC operational issues matters will receive a reply from Defra Ministers on the policy issue and be copied by the CCU and to JNCC's Managing Director in order that JNCC can provide a contribution on the operational aspects. CCU will ensure that a copy of the Ministers reply is sent to JNCC and the Sponsor Team.

Sponsor divisions in the devolved administrations will liaise directly with JNCC where contributions are required for answers to correspondence addressed to Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland Ministers.

General Correspondence

General correspondence received by Defra will be dealt with in a similar way to Parliamentary Correspondence with CCU passing letters which deal with purely JNCC operational matters to a central contact in JNCC so that JNCC may reply directly to the correspondent.

Where the letter covers both policy and JNCC operational issues, CCU will coordinate a reply, seeking contributions from both to the relevant policy team and JNCC via the central contact.

Sponsor divisions in the devolved administrations will liaise directly with JNCC where contributions are required for answers to general correspondence addressed to their administrations.