

## **Restoring Scotland's Nature JNCC & NatureScot Reception, Scottish Parliament, 27 September 2023**

Minister Slater, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Ladies and Gentleman. It is a huge privilege for JNCC to co-host this event with NatureScot and showcase the creativity, commitment and innovation that underpins the joint working between our two organisations in tackling the nature-climate crisis and helping deliver urgently needed nature restoration in Scotland and across the UK.

Although I was born in England and have lived there my whole life, half my blood is Scottish – my mother is a Macfarlane – and I don't think anyone with Scottish blood can fail to feel it when lucky enough to be visiting Edinburgh and all the more so here in this incredible building that houses the Scottish Parliament. We are very grateful to Arianne Burgess MSP, who has sponsored the reception here, and to all those who have played their part in making it happen. Thank you also to all of you who have taken time out of your Parliamentary and other workloads to come tonight.

So, what are some of the key elements of JNCC's joint working with NatureScot, and how has it proved useful? In the short time I have, I'd like to highlight a few aspects – there are of course many more.

First, UK-scale evidence. Nature conservation and recovery policies do not exist for their own sake. They need to have an impact, for the benefit of nature and our environment. A key part of JNCC's role is maintaining an evidence base on how nature across the UK is changing, so that we can objectively compare what difference our policy interventions are making.

Secondly, the marine environment. We have been collaborating closely to ensure a joined-up approach in the management of the marine environment both inshore (NatureScot's remit) and offshore (JNCC's remit) – and in doing so maximising biodiversity outcomes for the waters around Scotland. Nature Scot and JNCC have also been working collaboratively with the Scottish Government to establish a sustainable approach to the marine environment more widely.

Thirdly, joint working has also been essential in the context of the Global Biodiversity Framework and other international commitments. Under international law there is a need for UK-wide responses to track our progress towards meeting these commitments. Balancing this on the one hand, and the need to recognise and respect the differences of approach between the four countries of the UK, requires great care. JNCC's UK-wide convening role, working in partnership with NatureScot - as well as the other statutory nature conservation bodies in Wales, Northern Ireland and England – lies at the heart of making this work.

It would, however, be a lost opportunity to do no more than *recognise and respect* the differences of approach between the four countries of the UK. We also need to

*make the most of them.* In a world where many fear there is an increasing risk of an environmental race to the bottom, JNCC's bird's eye view as the UK-wide nature conservation advisor puts us in a position to encourage instead a race to the top. The autonomy of each of the four countries of the UK to adopt its own bespoke policies and approaches to the nature-climate crisis provides an opportunity for us all to learn from each other, for the common good. Enabling and facilitating this lies at the core of JNCC's mission, as recently set out in *Together for Nature* – JNCC's strategy to 2030. We do this by, amongst other things, understanding what approaches each country is promoting to particular issues, seeing how effective the implementation of these is and sharing those lessons with the other countries. The case studies that you'll be hearing about later this evening illustrate this point neatly by reference to some of the many Scottish exemplars in nature conservation.

Whatever the future may hold, one immutable certainty is that the four countries of the UK will always be neighbours; and nature of course does not respect boundaries. Collaboration will always be essential if we are to make the most of our common ambitions to leave the state of our nature in a markedly better place than we currently find it. I hope you enjoy hearing more about that collaboration this evening.

Thank you very much.

**Charles Banner K.C. Interim Chair, JNCC**  
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