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June 12<sup>th</sup> 2001

Dear Ms Burtenshaw,

### **Review of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee: Stage 1 Report**

Plantlife was grateful to be consulted on the review of JNCC's strategic direction. We responded in an email to the DETR Reviewer Mike Baldwin in November 2000 (see attached) and we welcome the opportunity to contribute further to the review.

As you may be aware Plantlife is Britain's only national membership charity dedicated exclusively to conserving all forms of plant life in their natural habitats: the nation's champions of wild plants. It has 12,000 members and owns 22 nature reserves with a total land holding of 3,900 acres. Plantlife is 'Lead Partner' for 77 species under the Government's Biodiversity Initiative. Plantlife also acts as the secretariat for *Planta Europa*, the European network of organisations and individuals interested in plant conservation and botanical research.

As we emphasised in our initial response, we have over the past ten years developed a close and constructive working relationship with the JNCC which we believe has contributed significantly to plant conservation in the UK. We were therefore delighted that the Stage 1 Report concluded that the work of the JNCC was "extremely valuable to the UK Government". We feel that the JNCC has great scientific expertise which can help set the strategic conservation policy across the UK for example on issues such as climate change, agricultural and fisheries reform.

We would however like to address one issue which has emerged from the Stage 1 Report with which we have some reservations. We are unhappy with that the establishment of the proposed UK Nature Advisory Council (UKNAC) and its new funding arrangements.

We have stated that we would like to see JNCC funding significantly increased. It has, in real terms, declined over the past ten years. This seems perverse at a time when we are fighting for nature conservation to be at the heart of Government thinking. In our response we recommended a new funding arrangement whereby JNCC secures money from central Government for certain UK functions which are not part of the remit of the country agencies. This would complement existing contributions from the statutory conservation agencies. We believe this would be the best way to guarantee appropriate interpretation and advice being

made available on important issues with an UK-wide or international dimension. We did not, however, anticipate a severing of ties with the country agencies. We believe that the JNCC should continue to receive ring-fenced funding from the country agencies across the UK especially as this would appropriately reflect the devolved nature of environmental issues in the UK.

Ultimately we want the JNCC to continue to provide independent expert advice to Government on UK nature conservation issues and provide the appropriate support to the statutory conservation agencies for their work in the separate countries. We do not think this requires the establishment of a new organisation. The JNCC needs money, ways to overcome existing problems associated with staff terms and conditions, and support to enable it to continue to provide an excellent service for nature conservation.

Thank you once again for giving us the opportunity to contribute to this important review. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would clarification on any of the points raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Harper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. Below the signature, there is a short, solid black horizontal line.

**Martin Harper**  
**Conservation Director**