CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Developing a Coordinated Approach to Ranger Services in the National Park

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Purpose

This paper summarises the work that has been undertaken to date on the development of a coordinated approach to ranger services and seeks approval to initiate a number of changes. Most of the changes cannot be made immediately but require a further period of discussion with partners and then consideration of further detailed recommendations by the Board in due course.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:
   a) approve the vision for ranger services in the National Park and the role they play in implementation of the National Park Plan;
   b) approve in principle that staff work with Forestry Commission Scotland towards the agreement of a concordat and associated work programmes for the delivery of ranger services in alignment with the ranger service vision and roles;
   c) approve in principle the transfer of the grant-aid function for ranger services from SNH to the National Park Authority, subject to further consideration of detailed matters following discussion with partners;
   d) approve further discussion with Aberdeenshire, Angus and Highland and Councils to secure:
      i) more operational influence for the National Park Authority over ranger service outputs on day to day level than would be provided by the transfer of grant aid;
      ii) an administratively simple and effective solution; and
      iii) a similar proportion of funding contribution from each partner as is currently provided.
   e) approve the establishment of a new liaison group for ranger services and other relevant operational staff dealing with management of the central Cairngorms massif; and

f) agree to progress the development of a visual image and conditions for its use by ranger services, using the National Park brand, in order to conspicuously link their work to the National Park.

Executive Summary

This paper summarises the work that has been done to date on the development of a coordinated approach to ranger services in the National Park and makes recommendations for changes including agreement of a vision statement and of the roles to be played by ranger services in implementation the Park Plan. The issues to be addressed if the Park Plan Outcomes are to be achieved are summarised. Various changes to the structural arrangements are required if these issues are to be overcome. Further recommendations deal with the coordination of operational staff in the central Cairngorms massif and the visual identity of ranger services and their link to the National Park.

Developing a Coordinated Approach to Ranger Services in the National Park – For Decision

Background

1.   The National Park Authority saw the development of a coordinated approach to the management of ranger services in the interest of the National Park as an early priority. A working group comprising CNPA Board members and officers, and officers of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) met regularly between February 2004 and January 2006 to advise on the work. During this period CNPA officers also met regularly with both Ranger Service managers and with the rangers themselves through the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (SCRA).

2.   The work was subsequently included in the National Park Plan which identifies the following action in the Priority for Action on Raising Understanding and Awareness of the National Park:

> "Develop a cohesive approach to management of ranger services that meets needs of visitors, land managers and communities and of the National Park."

3.   An issues paper was circulated to the Board and various Forums in September 2004 to prompt discussion. A Decision Paper was presented to the Board in March 2005. The Board agreed a number of principles that should guide future work in this area (**Annex 1**) and agreed to focus attention on three options for changing the management arrangements:

a)   That CNPA should influence ranger services' work programmes through liaison with SNH and coordinate other services through concordats and service level agreements.

b)   That CNPA take on the funding role of SNH and coordinate other services through concordats and service level agreements.

c)   That CNPA should move to directly employ and manage those rangers that are currently employed by local authorities.

4.   It should be noted that the Board explicitly rejected the 'no change' option as it was felt that some significant modifications were likely to be required to meet the needs of the National Park. The Board also rejected an option that CNPA should move to directly employ and manage all rangers in the Park as this would not present good value for money and did not sit well with the partnership approach to management of ranger services that had proved successful over many years.

5.   The Park Authority commissioned work to help evaluate these options for change and in January 2006 Peter Scott Planning Services completed their study (copies of the full report are available on request). This work had been advised by a small group chaired by Richard Stroud, Board member) comprising ranger managers, a representative of SCRA and SNH. During our discussions with ranger service managers, rangers and funding agencies there was no strong consensus about what were the most effective changes required to coordinate rangers across the National

Park. However, there was a strong consensus that the CNPA should now decide on the role it wishes to play in providing a coordinated approach to ranger service across the Park.

6.   Two informal Board discussion sessions took place in June 2006 and January 2007 to consider further the evaluation of the options for change and the role of ranger services in delivering the National Park Plan.

7.   While this longer term work was under way the Park Authority also undertook a number of activities to coordinate ranger services, including:
   a) Provision of advice to SNH about content of work programmes in the interests of the National Park;
   b) Organisation of annual ranger service gathering and provision of regular updates about the National Park;
   c) Provision of training opportunities to raise standards and capabilities;
   d) Coordination of an annual programme of events and guided walks for the Park; and
   e) Meeting with most ranger service managers in UK National Parks.

8.   A number of staff from ranger services also participate in the Advisory Forums organised by the Park Authority and have provided invaluable advice and expertise on a range of topics.

Discussion

9.   In considering the most effective way to take this issue forwards staff have used a simple framework for policy development (Table 1). The framework considers first the Outcome (or colloquially 'What do we want to achieve?') and then each of the stages that needs to be considered if this Outcome is to be achieved. This framework is used to structure the remainder of the paper.

Table 1: Framework for development of a coordinated and effective ranger service that helps to deliver the National Park Plan

2. Starting Point	3. Inputs	4. Obstacles to the achievement of Outcomes	5. Evaluation of options for changes required	6. Milestones	1.Outcomes
"Where are we now? What facts do we know?"	"What resources do we have available?"	"What issues do we need to address? What is stopping us from achieve the Outcome?"	"What changes are needed? How do we go about making them?"	"Are we making progress towards our outcome?"	"What do we want to achieve?"
Factual description of current situation with ranger	Costs of provision of services.	SWOT analysis in the context of the National Park.

Information from | Evaluation of the three options identified by the Board. | Milestones to chart progress towards Outcomes. | Five year Outcomes have been agreed in the NP Plan. We need a |

2. Starting Point	3. Inputs	4. Obstacles to the achievement of Outcomes	5. Evaluation of options for changes required	6. Milestones	1.Outcomes
services in the Cairngorms.	Sources of funds. Is the level of resource provision enough?	Peter Scott report. Overall assessment of ranger services' combined capability to meet needs of National Park.	Decisions required about how best to modify the management arrangements.		short vision statement for ranger services and then focus on the role that they should play in achieving NP Plan Outcomes.

Outcome: What do we want to achieve?

10.   Our vision for ranger services in the National Park is that collectively they provide:

a) "A highly visible, effective, customer-focussed overall service for the National Park, managed as part of a public-private partnership of affiliated ranger services, that helps to ensure that the Cairngorms becomes a world-class National Park. The specific aims are:
   i. *to ensure a welcome for visitors to the countryside through contributing to well managed informal recreation facilities and access to the countryside, and providing good information*
   ii. *to mediate between public use of land and water and other rural land uses including conservation of the natural heritage*
   iii. *to promote awareness and understanding of the countryside and, through this, encourage its responsible use; and*
   iv. *to care for and enhance Scotland's natural and cultural heritage enjoyed by visitors[1]."*

11.   However, ranger services are not an end in themselves and so it is important to be very clear about the specific role that they play in the management of the Park. This role is set out in **Annex 2** using the Priorities for Action and the five guiding principles from the National Park Plan as a framework.

12.   **It is recommended that the Board approve the vision for ranger services in the National Park (as described above) and the role they play in implementation of the National Park Plan (as set out in Annex 2)**

Starting Point: Where are we now?

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[1] The four aims listed apply to all ranger services in Scotland that receive financial assistance from SNH (with the exception that for the Cairngorms we have added the "cultural" to complement the natural heritage, as previously agreed by the Board). In time, these four purposes may change as a result of the ongoing policy review being undertaken by SNH and this vision will need to be revisited.

13.   The existing ranger services developed incrementally prior to the designation of the National Park. Therefore, when viewed from the perspective of the National Park as a whole the current management arrangements seem complicated and rather fragmented. **Annex 3** provides a summary of the key features of ranger services in the National Park**.**

Inputs: What resources do we have available?

14.   It is challenging to determine the total cost of ranger services within the National Park for a variety of reasons:
    a) management and support inputs are often not specifically itemised;
    b) costs of ranger service accommodation are often shared with other functions and not directly attributable to the ranger service;
    c) costs of ranger services that are paid through management agreements are often not disaggregated; and
    d) information from private estates is not publicly available;

15.   Nevertheless, the 27 FTE posts that are included for the purposes of this review are likely to incur a total cost in excess of £750,000 per annum. About 11.5 of these posts are wholly funded by the public sector (including agencies and local authorities) with a further 14.5 funded in part by the public sector through grant aid or management agreement. This is likely to amount to public sector funding in excess of £500,000 per annum.

16.   Two services are wholly funded by public bodies on the land that they manage: Forestry Commission Scotland (at Glenmore and in Deeside) and Highland and Islands Enterprise at the Cairngorm Estate. With the current proposals to transfer Cairngorm Estate to the Forestry Commission there are likely to be opportunities for integration of services in the Glenmore area.

17.   At the time of designation of the National Park, ten of the services received grant support from SNH, administered through three different management units involving eight SNH officers. This includes support to the four local authority services. The majority of these grants are for three years, based on an agreed annual programme of works. The funding for the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) at Mar Lodge is closely linked to the estate management agreement and is part of a national agreement with the Trust.

18.   However, CNPA has recently taken on a stronger lead role with two of these services through the funding the management of the Speyside Way and the coordination of public sector funding of a programme of works at Rothiemurchus Estate. This leaves SNH administering grant support to eight services. In 2006/07 this amounted to around £104,000, excluding the NTS Mar Lodge. The current maximum SNH grant is £11,250 per post per annum.

19.   An important question to ask at this stage is "Is this level of resources sufficient to reach the outcomes identified in the Park Plan?". In general terms the answer to this

question is a provisional "yes" but, only on the basis that significant changes would need to be made to the structural arrangements so that a much higher profile is given to delivery of the Park Plan outcomes in ranger service work plans. If these changes are not made, then either the outcomes are at significant risk of not being achieved or further financial resources will be required from the public sector. It should be noted in passing that Peter Scott Planning Services recommended that additional financial resources be directed to enhancing ranger services. This is not a view that CNPA officers support, preferring to get the maximum possible value for the National Park though structural changes (as described below) before any additional public sector resources are committed.

Obstacles to the achievement of Outcomes: What issues do we need to address?

20.   Peter Scott Planning Services undertook a detailed analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) arising from the current provision of ranger services in the Cairngorms (see **Annex 4**).

21.   It is clear from his research that individual employers value the service provided by the rangers they employ. In the case of five estates, one NGO and one community group the employers provide considerable financial support and management time in supporting the service. Similarly the officers from the public funding agencies seem generally content with the activities of the ranger services for the tasks that are currently undertaken (although some consider that changes should be made in relation to the National Park).

22.   However, when we consider the National Park as a whole, the current management arrangements leave much to be desired and simply are not appropriate to deliver the outcomes identified in the Park Plan. This assessment is not to downplay the generally high quality of work that is carried out by the individual ranger services and is primarily due to the incremental way in which the arrangements developed over time, prior to the establishment of the National Park and the new outdoor access legislation.

23.   The key issues to be addressed if the Park Plan outcomes are to be achieved are summarised below:
    a) Effective provision of a coordinated Park-wide service is hampered by the large number of public bodies involved and the long and complex lines of communication between the Park Authority, public funding agencies and the rangers who are 'on the ground'. These arrangements are expensive to operate and ultimately inflexible and ineffective at a National Park scale Peter Scott Planning Services identified that there are many opportunities to be gained by simplifying the current management arrangements (see **Annex 6**);
    b) Building on the point above, ranger services provide an extremely valuable presence "on the ground" with a high degree of "front line", customer contact. This is vital operational work that is particularly important as the Park Authority moves from the strategy development phase (i.e. preparation of the National   Park   Plan   and   associated   strategies)   on   to   their

implementation/delivery over the next five years and beyond. The current arrangements in the National Park currently lack good connections between the strategies and what happens on the ground on a week to week or month to month basis;

c) Effective provision of a coordinated Park-wide service is hampered by lack of clarity over agreed priorities for work in the context of the Cairngorms National Park. This will be addressed to some extent through promotion of the approach described in **Annex 2**. However, evidence to date suggests that the National Park is still considered to be an additional further item on the already long list of agendas and initiatives that ranger services are expected to deliver. Despite our efforts to date the priority and profile given to the National Park by ranger services is still relatively low and this shows little sign of changing unless significant structural changes to the arrangements are made;

d) The connection between ranger services and the entity of the National Park is very intangible for visitors, communities and land managers at present. This is a very significant missed opportunity for the National Park as we move into a delivery phase and where there is currently a very low visible presence of the National Park on the ground.

e) The CNPA, as the access authority, does not have an effective mechanism to use ranger services to promote outdoor access and other work beyond those sites managed by site based rangers. This is particularly serious given that the outdoor access Priority for Action is judged to be the most important of the Priorities for which ranger services have a role (see **Annex 2**). Furthermore, the lack of this mechanism affects two thirds of the National Park land area, and a considerable number of smaller land management units.

Evaluation of options for the changes required to achieve the Outcomes

24.   The overriding requirements of any changes that are to be made are that they should overcome the obstacles identified in the section above and ensure that the Park Plan Outcomes can be achieved. In addition, we should be careful to ensure that:

a) we continue to enable each of the ranger service managers to meet their own visitor and resource management needs; and

b) we develop a framework where it is easier to deploy ranger services to play the roles identified in Annex 2.

25.   A summary of the evaluation of the three options is contained in **Annex 4**. The evaluation has drawn on research carried out by Peter Scott Planning Services. Unfortunately, the complexity of the current arrangements precludes a single change that will overcome all of the obstacles identified above and so each sector is dealt with in turn below.

26.   The Forestry Commission Scotland wishes to retain their own, directly managed ranger service to maintain their site-based visitor and resource management functions, as is the case in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and other UK National Parks. However, FCS has indicated informally that they would agree to work with the CNPA to link their outputs to the National Park Plan and we feel that this can

develop into an effective partnership. In time we expect the Service managed by HIE to be integrated with FCS management of the estate. The agreement would not have any direct financial consequences for CNPA, has few risks and will be relatively simple to administer.

27.   **It is recommended that the Board approve in principle that staff work with Forestry Commission Scotland towards the agreement of a concordat and associated work programmes for the delivery of ranger services in alignment with the ranger service vision and roles (as set out in Annex 2) .**

28.   At the time of the Board paper presented in March 2005, SNH grant aided ten services. By April 2007 this will be reduced to eight services. The evaluation of the options leads to the conclusion that there are considerable advantages to be won if the Park Authority takes on the grant-aid role from SNH. In particular it would allow the Park Authority to play an enabling role, facilitating directly the work of a total of nine ranger services with a strong focus on the implementation of the National Park Plan. SNH would retain the national agreement with NTS Mar Lodge. Close partnership working would of course still be required between CNPA and SNH.

29.   Informal discussions with SNH indicate that they will seriously consider such a request but, to take matters further they require to know that this is the course of action that the Park Authority favours in principle. Such a transfer of function from one public body to another should incur no extra costs to the public purse and represents the kind of efficient inter-agency working for land management being encouraged by the Scottish Executive's "On the Ground" initiative. Any final decision will also require the SNH's approval and the acceptance of service managers.

30.   Approval of the recommendation below would directly affect the site-based ranger services and the only significant change for them would be that they apply to a different public body for grant aid. However, for the Area ranger services, managed by three local authorities, there are some potential disadvantages. For example, if other things stayed equal, the local authorities would in the future need to apply to two different bodies for grant aid rather than one (ie to CNPA for grant for that part of their work within the Park and to SNH for that part outside the Park). In addition, from a CNPA perspective, managing these Area ranger services at arms length may not give sufficient operational control or influence, especially in relation to outdoor access – already identified as the highest priority area of work (see **Annex 2**). A recent study from Loch Lomond and Trossachs NP and Paths for All Partnership[2] on land management incentives and outdoor access has shown the potentially invaluable role that rangers can play in this field through working closely with land managers.

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[2] Outdoor Access: Making the most of Land Management Incentives (PFAP and LLT NPA, October 2006)

31.   Given the limitations of the recommendation above in addressing the situation with Area ranger services in the long term, and their strategic importance in the Park, further options are considered below.

32.   **It is recommended that the Board approve in principle the transfer of the grant-aid function for ranger services from SNH to the National Park Authority, subject to further consideration of detailed matters following discussion with partners.**

33.   The options appraisal in **Annex 5** (Option 3) highlights that there are considerable advantages in transferring the ranger service function to CNPA (and this is what was recommended by Peter Scott for those local authorities that were willing to do so). However, the single biggest disadvantage is that new CNPA funds would require to be found to cover the non-grant aided element of the ranger service.

34.   A solution may be to negotiate with each of the three local authorities to see if there is a suitable compromise which maximises benefits while minimising disadvantages. For example, it may be possible for the relevant local authority to continue employing the staff (with grant aid from CNPA) but with CNPA giving day to day line management. Alternatively, CNPA could take on direct employment of the rangers and provision of the ranger service function with the local authority contributing to the financial package. Further discussion is clearly required but at this stage it would be helpful to get a steer from the Board about how best to proceed.

35.   **It is recommended that the Board approve further discussion with Aberdeenshire, Angus and Highland and Councils to secure:**
        a)   **more operational influence for the National Park Authority over ranger service outputs on day to day level than would be provided by the transfer of grant aid;**
        b)   **an administratively simple and effective solution; and**
        c)   **a similar proportion of funding contribution from each partner as is currently provided.**

Coordination of operational staff in the central Cairngorms massif

36.   One issue that arose out of the work of Peter Scott and from other discussions with partners is the need for better joint working between those staff working in the field in and around the central Cairngorms massif (ie the higher ground between Glenmore and Braemar, Glen Feshie and Glen Avon). There was a perception that there was a growing number of issues to do with visitor and resource management, interpretation and visitor safety where a more coordinated approach between site managers was required. While the relevant policies have now largely been developed (through the Park Plan and associated Strategies) there is a need for more joint working at operational level from the staff who are charged with putting the policies into practice. A similar proposal emerged from the discussions about transfer of Cairngorm Estate. CNPA would be well placed to convene such a group and provide secretariat functions. The resource requirements of doing so would not

be particularly onerous. Terms of reference would need to be developed but one meeting a year may be sufficient in the first instance.

37.   **It is recommended that the Board approve the establishment of a new liaison group for ranger services and other relevant operational staff dealing with visitor and resource management of the central Cairngorms massif.**

38.   As described above, the current ranger services are not visually linked to the National Park in any way. Given the importance of the work on raising awareness and understanding of the National Park in the Park Plan it would be worthwhile progressing this issue in the near future. The use of the National Park brand provides an obvious mechanism to do so and there are opportunities here to create synergy with visitor information, entry point markers and business use of the brand. Advice will be taken from the Brand Management Committee and there will also need to be discussion with the relevant ranger service mangers.

39.   **It is recommended that the Board agree to progress the development of a visual image and conditions for its use by ranger services, using the National Park brand, in order to conspicuously link their work to the National Park.**

Consultation

40.   In addition to the consultation outlined in the background to this paper, staff have at various times consulted and had advice from the Local Outdoor Access Forum and ViSIT Forums and the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils.

Delivering Sustainability

41.   The recommendations made are designed to better coordinate the work of ranger services for the benefit of the whole Park. We consider that this coordinated approach will be more effective in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability that the current rather fragmented arrangements.

Delivering a Park for All

42.   The recommendations would, if approved, help ensure that each of the ranger services working in alignment wit the five Guiding Principles in the Park Plan and they have an especially important role to play in Social Justice (a National Park for All) and People participating in the Park (A National Park for People).

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

43.   The recommendations would, if approved, incur no additional public sector spend. The result should be the development of a coordinated approach to ranger services will make the delivery of key priorities in the National Park Plan more effective and efficient.

Implications

Financial Implications

44.   There are no immediate direct financial consequences arising from the paper. The financial implications for the CNPA would depend on the outcome of the detailed discussions with public sector partners, particularly SNH and the local authorities. Staff will seek Board authorisation prior to entering into any financial commitments incurred over either the transfer of the SHN grant support to ranger services or ranger functions currently undertaken by local authorities.

Presentational Implications

45.   We need to be clear with all stakeholders that the recommendations in this paper require further detailed discussion and consideration by the CNPA Board, SNH and others. Any changes on the ground arising from this work are likely to take at least 12 to 18 months to implement. During this period regular updates will be sent to ranger service managers and with rangers through SCRA and meeting arranged where necessary.

Implications for Stakeholders

46.   This work is complex and requires a measured approach to achieve the best outcome for the National Park. However, with the Park Plan now finalised partners are keen for the CNPA decide on how it going to better coordinate ranger services and implement the Park Plan. The longer we leave the implementation of any changes the more uncertainty it creates amongst the ranger service community and their key partners. Therefore, we would like to ensure that the work arising from the approval of the recommendations a key priority.

Next Steps

47.   The next step is to work with partners, especially SNH and ranger service managers, to collate further information about how best to make necessary transition arrangements and to present detailed proposals to the Board. It is hoped that this would be possible by Autumn 2007.

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Annex 1: Principles for Developing Park-wide Ranger Provision

1.   The existing Ranger Services in the Cairngorms do much valuable work but there is a need to ensure that they are working in the best interests of the Park in a way that collectively achieves the Park aims in a coordinated way. The Park Authority has a key role in ensuring that this takes place. CNPA should consider options for changes and position itself so as to have more direct influence over the activities of ranger services in the Park

2.   The existing mix of private and public sector funding and management has considerable strengths and should not be lost. Any changes required should be introduced gradually, in a considered fashion, over a number of years and in a way that simplifies arrangements rather than adding additional bureaucracy.

3.   The four aims of ranger services (as described in paragraph 10) should be adopted for the services within the Park with the addition of the words "and cultural heritage" to the second and fourth aims.

4.   Rangers should continue to service the needs of three principal customer groups: visitors, land managers and local communities. Where possible links with local communities should be strengthened.

5.   The principal Park-wide strategies that will influence the work of ranger services over the next three years are the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, the Outdoor Access Strategy and Interpretation Strategy. The work of rangers will also be important in delivering the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and in promoting the adoption of the John Muir Award.

6.   The work of ranger services should be regularly evaluated to ensure that it is effectively and efficiently meeting agreed outputs and contributes to the Park aims.

7.   The Park Authority should not consider applications for funding new ranger services until an overall ranger strategy for the Park has been agreed.

8.   Rangers should be clearly identifiable to the public and be conspicuously linked to the National Park in some way.

9.   Rangers should continue to have a strong local presence and be dispersed throughout the National Park.

10.   Ranger policy within the National Park should continue to have strong linkages with national policy and practice for countryside rangers in Scotland.

11.   As part of implementing necessary changes a concise Ranger Service Strategy should be prepared for approval by the Board. In the meantime CNPA staff should continue to provide support and coordination functions and liaise closely with existing ranger service managers and with rangers through their professional association.

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Annex 2: Role of Ranger Services in implementation of the Cairngorms National Park Plan

1.   The seven Priorities for Action are listed in priority order for implementation (i.e. those at the top of the table are higher priority than those at the bottom). The specific roles to be carried out are different for each of three forms of Ranger Service (as defined in **Annex 3**)

2.   Each of the Ranger Services should also be influenced by the five Guiding Principles in the Park Plan and they should give special attention to Social Justice (a National Park for All) and People participating in the Park (A National Park for People).

Key role = relatively more time; Subsidiary Role = relatively less time.

National Park Plan Priority for Action	Site-based Ranger Services (e.g. Glen Tanar, Rothiemurchus) Role is focussed at and about their site. Principal customer groups are land managers and visitors.	Area Ranger Services (e.g. Aberdeenshire or Highland Council) Role is focussed over wider area, outwith the areas covered by Site-based services. Principal customer groups are communities and land managers.	Community-based Ranger Services (i.e. Nethy Bridge – seasonal) Role is focused in and around their community of place. Principal customer groups are communities and visitors.
1. Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access	Key role in promoting high quality opportunities for outdoor access. Key role in promoting responsible behaviour on their sites.	Key role in promoting high quality opportunities for outdoor access. Key role in upholding access rights. Key role in promoting responsible behaviour. Key role in assisting land managers without Site based ranger services.	Key role in promoting high quality opportunities for outdoor access. Key role in promoting responsible behaviour on their sites.
2. Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park	Key role in providing a highly visible, front face for the National Park Key role in connecting land managers, visitors and communities to the National Park. Key role in providing information and promoting understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area.	Key role in providing a highly visible, front face for the National Park Key role in connecting land managers, visitors and communities to the National Park. Key role in providing information and promoting understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area.	Key role in providing a highly visible, front face for the National Park Key role in connecting land managers, visitors and communities to the National Park. Key role in providing information and promoting understanding and enjoyment of the special

			qualities of the area.
	Key role in encouraging people to become ambassadors for the Cairngorms National Park, especially through volunteer programmes and the John Muir Award.	Key role in encouraging people to become ambassadors for the Cairngorms National Park, especially through volunteer programmes and the John Muir Award.	Key role in encouraging people to become ambassadors for the Cairngorms National Park, especially through volunteer programmes and the John Muir Award.
3. Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity in Landscapes	Key role in promoting people's enjoyment of, and raising awareness/understanding of, the Park's biodiversity, geodiversity, landscapes and cultural heritage. Key role in providing opportunities for volunteers to become practically involved in monitoring and management of the Park's special natural and cultural heritage at and about their site. Key role in involving people in actions arising from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.	Key role in promoting people's enjoyment of, and raising awareness/understanding of, the Park's biodiversity, geodiversity, landscapes and cultural heritage. Sub. role in providing opportunities for volunteers to become practically involved in management of the Park's special natural and cultural heritage . Sub. role in involving people in actions arising from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.	Key role in promoting people's enjoyment of, and raising awareness/understanding of, the Park's biodiversity, geodiversity, landscapes and cultural heritage. Sub. role in providing opportunities for volunteers to become practically involved in management of the Park's special natural and cultural heritage Key role in involving people in actions arising from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
4. Making Tourism Business More Sustainable.	Key role in working with partners (eg Tourist Information Centres) to improve quality of visitors' experiences Role in providing information about visitor numbers and behaviour.	Key role in working with partners (eg Tourist Information Centres) to improve quality of visitors' experiences Role in providing information about visitor numbers and behaviour.	Key role in working with partners (eg Tourist Information Centres) to improve quality of visitors' experiences Role in providing information about visitor numbers and behaviour.
5. Supporting Sustainable Deer Management.	Sub. role in communicating objectives and practices of sustainable deer management to Park residents and visitors. Key role for some ranger	Sub. role in communicating objectives and practices of sustainable deer management to Park residents and visitors.	Sub. role in communicating objectives and practices of sustainable deer management to Park residents and visitors.

	services in managing visitors to allow safe and efficient deer management on estates.	Sub. role to liaise with land managers and promote visitor management that allows safe and efficient deer management on estates.	
6. Integrated Public Support for Land management.	Sub. role in communicating objectives and practices of land management to Park residents and visitors.	Sub. role in communicating objectives and practices of land management to Park residents and visitors.	Sub. role in communicating objectives and practices of land management to Park residents and visitors.
7. Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

Annex 3: Ranger Services in the National Park
"Where are we now? What facts do we know?"

1. **Number of staff:** 27 FTE rangers work in the National Park, as part of 13 different ranger services.

2. **Management arrangements:** There is a variety of employers/managers including:
    a) non-governmental organisations (e.g. National Trust for Scotland)
    b) public bodies (e.g. Forestry Commission Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise)
    c) private land managers (e.g. Rothiemurchus); and
    d) local authorities (e.g. Aberdeenshire).

3. Some of these services work as part of much larger organisations that straddle the boundary of the Park (e.g. in Aberdeenshire and on the Speyside Way). One ranger service is effectively one member of staff on a privately owned estate and receives no public funding.

4. **Aims:** Ranger services funded by SNH have a set of common aims that apply at national level:
    a) To ensure a welcome for visitors to the countryside through contributing to well managed informal recreation facilities and access to the countryside, and providing good information
    b) To mediate between public use of land and water and other rural land uses including conservation of the natural heritage
    c) To promote awareness and understanding of the countryside and, through this, encourage its responsible use; and
    d) To care for and enhance Scotland's natural heritage enjoyed by visitors

5. **Different forms of ranger service:** While ranger services all do a basically similar job, we have inherited three basic forms in the Cairngorms:
    a) "Site-based" Services – operating over a smaller area which is commonly one land management unit or site (e.g. Glen Tanar or Rothiemurchus Ranger Service). These sites amount to about 1/3 of total land area of the Park and are currently covered by about 23 FTE rangers.
    b) Area Services – operating over a wider area an over land owned by many different people (e.g. Highland or Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service). These Services currently have about 3.5 FTE rangers.
    c) Community based Service – operating in and around a particular community of place on land owned by many different people (e.g. Nethy Bridge Ranger Service). This Service currently has 0.75 FTE rangers.

6. **Customers**: The three main customer groups for ranger services are visitors, local communities and land-managers. The degree to which each ranger service currently orientates their work towards each customer group varies considerably.

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7.   **Geographic distribution:** The only area of the National Park that does not have ranger coverage is the area of Moray outwith the Crown Estate land at Glenlivet.

8.   Site-based services have generally developed on estates where there are large visitor numbers and good road access to the countryside such as the Glenmore corridor, Glen Tanar, Glen Muick, Mar Lodge and Glen Clova. Ranger services currently provide visitor management at the most popular visitor destinations in the National Park.

9.   Rangers operate bases that are open to the public and provide information and interpretation at the following locations: -

- Rothiemurchus
- Nethy Bridge (seasonal)
- Tomintoul
- Glen Tanar

- Glen Muick
- Glenmore Forest
- Cairngorm Estate

10.   **Visible links between ranger services and the National Park:** Three of the ranger bases contain panels with photos with the National Park brand and words from the Interpretation Framework linking the site to the National Park. Work on installing panels at the other ranger bases is ongoing. None of the ranger services are currently linked to the National Park by use of the Park brand image on their clothing/vehicles.

SNH Policy Review

11.   SNH are currently undertaking a national review of policy on ranger services. CNPA has already fed into the early stages of the review and will be consulted further in due course.

Cairngorms National Park Authority
January 2007

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Annex 4: SWOT Analysis of Ranger Services in the Cairngorms (Peter Scott Planning Services, January 2006)

Strengths	Weaknesses
+ ranger coverage of many popular visitor areas in the Park + rangers can play key roles in delivering national policies and National Park aims, policies and programmes + diversity of ranger services can enable focus on local and stakeholders' needs + well established ranger services, with support from operators (e.g. local authorities, estates) + mix of public, private and voluntary sector involvement and funding is healthy and justifies public funding + private estates and other employers (e.g. FCS, NTS, HIE, Explore Abernethy) provide 20.5 fte rangers, who cover around 1/3rd of the Park area + many highly experienced and skilled rangers + some services are highly visible and at the frontline of visitor welcome and visitor services + some ranger services have good community links + advice and support from SNH and, potentially, CNPA	− fragmented ranger coverage, with gaps in some popular areas (e.g. Clunie Water, Glen Feshie) − only 5 fte rangers have area-wide remits and are not tied to specific estates/other land; thereby, limiting the flexibility of deploying rangers within the Park − so far, CNPA has had little significant influence over rangers' activities and been unable to ensure that these match the Authority's priorities or programmes − some services focus on restricted sites/activities, with little attention to wider Park visitors or programmes and the rangers do not act as 'ambassadors' for the Park − some area-wide services have low 'visibility' to visitors and poor links to communities, landowners and others − several services are under-resourced and vulnerable to, for example sickness, loss of external funding, etc. − rangers, wardens, project officers and others undertaking similar/related activities lead to confusion − little liaison or mutual support between services and difficulties in communicating, due to different locations, priorities and cultures. In particular, little coordination between area-wide and site-based rangers − small services offer limited career opportunities − inefficiencies in SNH's funding and support (e.g. multiple contacts) and NPA's role is not well developed − ranger services' annual returns do not enable effective comparisons of their activities and performance
Opportunities	**Potential Threats**
✓ scope to strengthen ranger resources (funds, staffing) and increase their effectiveness through more focussed programmes linked to priorities in the Park Plan ✓ scope to fill geographical gaps, through enhanced/new services and new ways of working (e.g. joint services) ✓ rangers can play key roles as 'first point of contact' and 'ambassadors' for the National Park – in relation to residents, land managers, visitors and other groups ✓ rangers can help to deliver Park aims and programmes ✓ NPA can bring new resources, coordination and support for ranger services, target local and Park-wide issues and stimulate ranger services development ✓ NPA can link rangers to its longer-term agenda, while developing a more responsive system to cater for changing priorities	1. issues of sustainability of ranger services, due to lack of growth or decline in funding – especially grant aid; rangers will need to justify their value for money 2. further fragmentation of ranger services and loss of focus and identity (e.g. services promoting own brand) 3. some ranger services' lack of focus on National Park agendas puts them at risk of withdrawal of funding and other support 4. expectations of rangers' client groups exceed resources to deliver 5. lack of market information on visitors', communities' and land managers' needs/aspirations for ranger services 6. lack of understanding of rangers' roles and potential by some communities and land managers - potentially

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✓ scope for SNH's rangers policy review to refresh and enhance SNH's support for rangers (e.g. training) ✓ scope for more cooperation and support between services ✓ potential for ranger services to harness community and volunteer support (e.g. events, conservation projects) ✓ potential to develop career opportunities for local people in rangering and countryside management	leading to loss of support for/confidence in services **7.** any reductions in SNH's national advice, training and other support may be detrimental to standards, etc.

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Annex 5: Summary evaluation of the three options for change in the management arrangements of ranger services.

1.   CNPA reach concordats with other public sector organisations over management of their ranger services

Key features:	
• Would affect FCS and HIE (or probably only FCS if the transfer of land at Cairngorm Estate goes ahead) • Concordat and annual agreement with CNPA and over agreed outputs/outcomes as part of three year management strategies.	
Advantages: • Inexpensive and relatively simple • Leaves the delivery public body to get on and line-manage the staff while providing CNPA with some scope for influence	**Disadvantages**: • None
Challenges in implementation: • Now that FCS and HIE have signed up to outcomes in the NP Plan, no significant problems are anticipated. • Joint badging required to promote the identity of the National Park.	
Overall assessment: Worth pursuing	

2.   CNPA influence the relevant ranger service work programmes through liaison with SNH.

Key features:	
• This option applies to all those services financially assisted by SNH in the Park • Most applicants continue to apply for grant aid to SNH. • Advice/ guidance is provided by CNPA about key priorities and SNH then incorporated into work plans.	
Advantages: • Least change option • No net extra cost to public purse • Retains strong public-private mix	**Disadvantages:** • Potentially much more bureaucratic • Potentially confusing to staff on the ground. • Does not simplify the structure or shorten lines of communication • Does not guarantee alignment of ranger services to the National Park Plan. • May requires SNH reorganisation to be effective for the Park.

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Challenges in implementation:
- Agreement would be needed from SNH to give the National Park a very substantially higher profile than has been the case in the past;
- To be even partially effective this would require SNH to reorganise so that one officer covers all ranger services in the Cairngorms;
- Any change may take some time to emerge as SNH are just about to embark on a review of SNH policy on rangers;
- Most ranger managers don't mind too much who they are funded by – as long as they continue to receive financial support in an efficient way.

Overall assessment: Feasible and effective to some extent but cumbersome and unlikely to overcome the obstacles identified in the paper.

3.   CNPA should take on the grant-aid function from SNH.

Key features:
- This option applies to those services financially assisted by SNH in the Park (with exception of Mar Lodge where it would difficult to extricate ranger funding from the national management agreement);
- Applicants for grant aid would apply to CNPA who would make discretionary grant offers conditional on agreed work programmes linked to the National Park Plan for three year periods, reviewed annually;
- May need recruitment of one post for supervision - or transfer/secondment from SNH; and
- This system would fit well with the rest of Scotland but CNPA would be the lead public body with the Park rather than SNH.

Advantages:	**Disadvantages:**
- Much closer link between ranger services and the National Park - Opportunity for CNPA to influence what happens on the ground directly - No net extra cost to public purse - Efficiency savings and much simpler - Retains strong public-private mix	- Some SNH staff feel they would lose out on close contact with rangers Local authorities ranger services that straddle the boundary, would have to apply for two different grants, one form SNH and one form CNPA

Challenges in implementation:
- Most stakeholders agree this would be a good way to strengthen the connection between ranger services and the Park
- Agreement would be needed from SNH and, as SNH are in the middle of their review of ranger policy, this may take some time
- Most ranger managers don't mind too much who they are funded by – as long as they continue to receive financial support in an efficient way

Overall assessment: Simpler and more effective than Option 2 in overcoming obstacles identified in the paper.

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4.   CNPA directly employ a small group of rangers, taking on the role of some rangers who are currently employed by the local authorities.

Key features:	
• Only applies to Area Rangers (currently employed by local authorities) • New employees for CNPA, probably with transfer arrangements from local authority • No change for Moray as their rangers are on Speyside Way (and CNPA funds them already to work in the National Park)	
Advantages: • Direct control of a small number of posts that would, as team cover all of the Park that was not already covered by "site based" services • Ability to undertake direct access work & flexibility to work on changing priorities over time • Much stronger connections to National Park • As part of wider package retains a good balance of direct control/delivery versus influence through others	**Disadvantages**: • May not be popular with some local authorities. • It is likely that the local authorities would want to withdraw funding from these functions.
Challenges in implementation: • Increase in CNPA staff numbers • CNPA would need to find the funds to cover the non-grant aided element of the ranger service or get the local authority to continue to contribute to costs. • Office costs and associated considerations to be found.	
Overall assessment: Simple and effective but the need to find new CNPA financial resources to cover the non-grant aided element of the ranger service is a very significant disadvantage.	

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Annex 6: Recommendations to assist the development of coordinated approach to Ranger Services (Peter Scott Planning Services, January 2006)

1. In the course of discussions with ranger service managers and managers of estates without ranger services, and the consultant's other research during this study, several potential means of progressing the development and increasing the effectiveness of ranger services in the National Park have been highlighted. These include –

    a) **further developing liaison and joint working mechanisms for ranger services** – there is evident scope for the CNPA to promote and support –

        i) **a Cairngorms Ranger Network** – including ranger managers and rangers, which would meet more regularly than the current Cairngorms Rangers Group and annual Ranger Managers Meetings; in some instances, meeting as a joint meeting of ranger managers and rangers, and, at other times, with rangers or managers meeting separately (e.g. managers' discussions' on employment issues, rangers' training meetings,). This network could include meetings, a newsletter, e-forum (see below), joint seminars, training programmes, etc.

        ii) **Area Ranger Groups** – perhaps covering three operational areas - e.g. Badenoch, Aviemore and Glenmore; Strathspey and Moray; and Aberdeenshire and Angus - and with the remit and support from CNPA to coordinate visitor programmes and develop mutual support mechanisms (e.g. inventory of specialist equipment, emergency support procedures, support for events). Rural Fire Groups provides a model for how such groups may facilitate support between ranger services

        iii) **Cairngorm ranger services and resources directory** – for example, an electronic directory (Webpage) comprising a directory of ranger and associated services in the National Park and adjacent areas (e.g. North Perthshire) and a password protected directory of skills and expertise (e.g. visitor monitoring expertise, upland pathwork skills), contractors availability and assessments, placement candidates and volunteers, and specialist equipment (e.g. powered wheelbarrows, survey equipment)

        iv) **Cairngorms ranger services e-forum** – a password protected e-forum for news, discussion and experience sharing between ranger services in the Park

    b) **Raising the profile of ranger services in the National Park** – by, for example -

        i) **clearly identifying the *Cairngorms National Park* in the badging of ranger services** – while also identifying the operator of the ranger service

        ii) ***Ranger Post* or similar signing** – currently, many ranger bases or visitor centres through which rangers may be contacted are not signed as such. It is recommended that highly visible signing to a common design be used to sign all ranger bases, visitor centres with a ranger presence, or reception points with links to a ranger service, as a *Ranger Post* (or similar). The signing should refer to the *Cairngorms National Park* and identity of the ranger service. The design and format should be agreed with the respective ranger managers

        iii) **National Park 'shop-fronts'** - to counter the lack of 'visibility' of many ranger services - and the National Park – combined reception, information and display points (e.g. TIC, leased shop-front) should be established in central positions in Aviemore and Ballater - the central focal points for many visitors to the Park. These reception points could provide 'gateways' to all National Park services and

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provide information on access networks, ranger-led events and places of interest, and promote responsible access

iv) **enhanced information on how to contact a ranger** – while ranger services may have leaflets or posters at visitor centres, which provide contact information (e.g. telephone numbers), this information may not be readily accessible to the casual visitor, hill walker, or others. Consideration should be given to developing a National Park telephone information line, Website information, and the wider provision of information on all ranger services throughout the Park (e.g. TICs, accommodation, outdoor equipment shops)

a) **improving understanding of rangers' roles** – consultations have highlighted the limited understanding of the potential roles and support rangers can provide to visitors, land managers and communities. There is a need to promote understanding of rangers' roles and potential contributions within the National Park – especially to managers of estates and other land holdings, which do not operate ranger services. Such information will be vital, where core path networks are being developed, as rangers can play vital roles in helping to allay fears about, or prevent, any problems arising from the use of core paths and other routes

b) **providing enhanced support for land managers by area-based rangers** – there is little contact in most of the Park between the local authority ranger services and land managers – especially those managing land adjacent to popular road/path corridors or other visitor 'honeypots', where these are not already covered by ranger services. Contact with, and support from, rangers to these and other land managers are part of the 'added value' that land managers should be able to expect as a result of national park designation

c) **research and pilot projects** – there is a lack of information and innovation to support the effective provision of ranger services in the National Park. In particular, it is suggested that CNPA and its partners –

i) **undertake further research into the support and services needed and desired by local communities, schools and other educational groups, visitors and others from rangers and related Park services**

ii) **assess the potential needs and scope for expanding rangers' support to those land managers in the Park, who currently do not have direct access to a ranger service** – this should take account of future access management needs relating to core path networks, etc.

iii) **develop pilot projects to assess the scope for new or expanded ways of delivering ranger and related services in the National Park; for example –**

- **joint ranger services** – i.e. ranger services provided by one estate, but which cover adjacent estates, subject to operational agreements
- **voluntary rangers** – whereby volunteers (or others, who may be paid an annual honorarium) are recruited, trained and supervised to undertake specific ranger-type duties - e.g. volunteer rangers for local core path networks, whose duties may include patrolling, minor maintenance, and monitoring and reporting issues on path condition, user conflicts, etc.

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