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## CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

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**Title:** Role of Ranger Services in Cairngorms National Park

**Prepared by:** Pete Crane, Senior Visitor Services Officer

**Purpose:** To discuss the future role of CNPA in co-ordinating ranger services in CNP.

### Advice Sought

The Forum is invited to provide advice on:-

- the key areas of work where the National Park Authority should seek to influence work of ranger services in the National Park over the next three years; and
- whether the need to promote responsible access in Deeside justifies the CNPA trying to encourage a greater ranger presence in the area.

### Background

1. Cairngorms National Park Authority does not directly employ a ranger service but provides grant aid to most services and works with all services to develop a coordinated approach across the National Park. In this respect we are unique among UK national park authorities.
2. There are currently 11 ranger services operating in the CNP that receive financial support from public bodies. These services were all in existence prior to designation of the National Park. These services are managed and funded by a range of partners including local authorities, private estates, NGO's and one community group. Table 1 below shows a breakdown of services operating in CNP. These services will increase when the CNP boundary expands in October to include the Atholl Estates ranger service and the National Trust for Scotland ranger service at Killiecrankie.
3. The existing services cover the whole of the National Park although presence in the central montane area is limited. We consider that prior to the National Park designation ranger services were employed by those estates that required rangers to manage visitors i.e. they naturally developed in the areas of most need.

**Table 1 Rangers Services in CNP**

Ranger Service	No of Rangers	Funding
Highland Council	2	Highland Council & CNPA Grant
Angus Council	2	Angus Council & CNPA Grant

Aberdeenshire Council	0.4	Aberdeenshire Council and CNPA Grant
Explore Abernethy	0.7	Explore Abernethy & CNPA Grant
Rothiemurchus Estate	2	Rothiemurchus Estate & CNPA Grant
Glenlivet Estate	1.4	Crown Estate & CNPA Grant
Glen Tanar Charitable Trust	1.6	GTCT & CNPA Grant
Balmoral Estate	2.6	Balmoral Estate & CNPA Grant
Forestry Commission Scotland	1.4	FCS
Mar Lodge, National Trust for Scotland	1.5	NTS & SNH through a national concordat
Cairngorm Mountain	1.9	HIE
	<b>17.5</b>	

4. Following several years of discussion with partners the CNPA took on the grant aid role for ranger services in April 2009. This was previously administered by SNH. The current grant amounts to some £143,000 per annum.
5. We offer grant annually to ranger services following agreement over a work programme that is mutually beneficial to our aims in delivering the National Park Plan and the aims of the employer.
6. In taking on this grant aid the Board of CNPA agreed that the main areas of the National Park Plan where we should seek to influence ranger work were:-
  - Promoting Responsible Outdoor Access;
  - Raising Understanding and Awareness of CNP; and
  - Conserving and Enhancing Natural and Cultural Heritage.

These areas fit well with the national ranger aims of welcoming people to the countryside, increasing understanding and care of natural and cultural heritage, and sustainable management of the outdoors.

7. The Board were reluctant to consider any increase in ranger services through additional CNPA grant aid until we had developed our co-ordination role and consequently better placed to identify gaps in provision.

### **Future Role of Rangers in CNP**

8. The CNPA corporate plan ends in April 2011 so it is now appropriate to look again at our priorities for ranger services over the next three years. It is important to remember that rangers are employed to meet the objectives of their employer and our grant aid influences that work. Annex 1 provides an overview of the collective work of the CNPA grant aided ranger services during 2009/10.
9. We welcome the LOAF's views on what you think are the future priorities for rangers in CNP. There are a number of factors worthy of consideration: the access legislation is no longer new but is it understood by users? There are still areas such

as behaviour associated with dogs, wild camping and fire lighting that cause land owners concern. We still wish to encourage people to regularly exercise for health and enjoyment. The new Curriculum for Excellence will create new opportunities for rangers to work with school groups. The ongoing development of CNP as a visitor destination will also provide opportunities for rangers.

### **Ranger Services in Deeside**

10. The ranger services operating on Glen Tanar, Balmoral and Mar Lodge Estates are very effective at promoting responsible access on their sites but this leaves large areas of Deeside to 0.4 of a ranger employed by Aberdeenshire Council.
11. Over the last few years we have been aware of a number of broader access problems in this area. The most notable problem is probably the irresponsible behaviour associated with camping near Braemar. As a short term fix to this specific problem this year we have provided financial support to Invercauld Estate to employ staff to promote responsible access around Braemar.
12. We welcome the LOAF's views on whether the access issues in Deeside are likely to be ongoing and merit us looking at increasing the ranger provision. In practical terms this would mean working with Aberdeenshire Council to expand the 0.4 fte ranger so that there is greater coverage across the whole area of Deeside in CNP.

**The Forum is invited to discuss the priorities for ranger work in the CNP over the next three years, and the merit in expanding the Aberdeenshire service in Deeside.**

### **Annex I: Work of Ranger Services in CNP 'at a glance' Outputs from 2009/10 work plans for CNPA granted aided services**

#### **Welcome to Visitors**

*Encouraging and promoting responsible access*

CNPA grant aided rangers provide visitor management on six key sites. Four services work on estates; Balmoral, Glenlivet, Glen Tanar and Rothiemurchus. In addition Angus Glens RS provide visitor management on Glen Doll and Explore Abernethy RS in Nethy Bridge.

These services cover an area of 888 sq km (23% of CNP) and provide a welcome to some 580,000 visitors.

#### **Raising Understanding and Awareness**

*Events and education work raise understanding of the special qualities of the National Park and also promote responsible access.*

- Public Events – 4,112 people attended ranger lead events across CNP.
- Education – 2,460 young people in education spent time with a ranger in CNP working on curriculum projects.

- Volunteering – rangers supported 613 days of volunteering in the CNP.
- Two, week long, Europarc Junior Ranger programmes delivered, one in Deeside and one in Badenoch and Strathspey.

### **Conserving and Enhancing**

Ranger services help to manage designated sites including Glen Tanar NNR, Abernethy NNR and native pine woods of Rothiemurchus. In addition much of their work is aimed at improving biodiversity. Activity listed below is from two of the eight services, the full list is much more extensive.

- Aspen - raising cuttings
- Salmonids - riparian plantings
- Damselflies/dragonflies - keeping ponds open
- Butterflies - maintaining open glades
- Capercaillie - building brushwood shelters
- Glen Doll Forest Red Squirrel Project
- Angus Squirrel database held for county records
- Tayside Squirrel Forum
- Mink monitoring
- Plant monitoring in Corrie Fee for SNH

### **Partnership Working**

Partnership working is essential to the delivery of rangers work programmes. Key partners in 2009/10 included:-

- Tayside Squirrel Forum
- Angus Squirrel Group
- Woodland sub group
- Bird of Prey monitoring for Tayside Raptor Study Group
- Upland Path Advisory Group
- East Grampian Deer Management Group
- Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust- assisted project officers with various projects.
- Eco-Schools
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- RSPB
- SNH
- Nethy Bridge Tourist Association
- Glenlivet Community heritage/interpretation project
- Walkers are Welcome community initiative
- Marketing groups; Tomintoul & Glenlivet Highland Holidays / Cairngorms Business Partnership
- Royal Deeside and Cairngorms DMO
- Deeside Access Managers Group
- Cairngorms NNR's Managers Group