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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

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

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### **Purpose**

This paper summaries the progress and next steps in developing a coordinated approach to ranger services since Cairngorms National Park Authority agreed to take on the role of providing ranger grants. The case for funding Rothiemurchus ranger service is also presented.

### **Recommendations**

- a) *The Board notes the work undertaken since May 2008 in developing a coordinated approach to ranger services in the National Park.*
- b) *The Board approves, in principle, CNPA offering a ranger grant to Rothiemurchus Estate for the duration of the current corporate plan.*

### **Executive Summary**

SNH previously provided grant funding to 7 of the 12 ranger services within the Park. As of April 2009 this grant fund was transferred to CNPA. CNPA has now agreed grant funding with 6 of these ranger services to assist in the delivery of Park Plan objectives and National Ranger outcomes. Further work is being taken forward to better coordinate all 12 ranger services which will help to develop a Cairngorms 'family' of ranger services. The Rothiemurchus Estate Ranger Service has a vital role to play in this 'family'. They do not currently receive a grant for the public benefits delivered by the ranger service. This is due to a change in the way that public support is given to Rothiemurchus for the delivery of public benefits. A case is made for CNPA to offer, in principle, ranger grant to the Estate.

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## DEVELOPING A COORDINATED APPROACH TO RANGER SERVICES IN THE NATIONAL PARK - FOR DECISION

### Background

1. In March and November 2007 the CNPA Board agreed that:
  - a) Ranger services have a key role to play in the delivery of the National Park Plan in;
    - i. High Quality Outdoor Access
    - ii. Raising Understanding and Awareness
    - iii. Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes
  - b) CNPA are best placed to coordinate the work of ranger services Park wide; and
  - c) In principle, the coordination role would be greatly assisted if CNPA were to take on the SNH grant aid for ranger services within the National Park. This was formally approved by the Finance Committee in May 2008.
2. Between 2003 and 2008 twelve ranger services received public support in the National Park, seven of these supported by ranger grant from SNH. Grant aid supports the work of the rangers; however, the main costs are borne by the employer. Details of the services within the National Park can be viewed in Annex I.
3. In developing this work we have been guided by a set of principles agreed by the Board in March 2005 (Annex 2). Two of those principles are particularly relevant to this paper:
  - a) Ranger policy within the National Park should continue to have strong linkages with national policy and practice for countryside rangers in Scotland; and
  - b) The Park Authority should not consider applications for funding new ranger services until an overall strategy for the Park has been agreed.
4. In 2008 SNH produced a new national statement on 'Rangers in Scotland'. This was accompanied by a change to national priorities and the grant application process.

### CNPA Grant Funding for Ranger Services in the Park

5. In December 2008 Scottish Government approved the transfer of £120,000 of ranger grant from SNH to CNPA. This came into effect from April 2009. The seven services affected by the transfer were offered the opportunity to apply for grant. Applications were based on the grant application format used nationally by SNH (Annex 3). A condition of grant was that work programmes need to clearly demonstrate delivery of National Park Plan outcomes as well as meeting national ranger policy and the employer's needs. The grant offered was based directly on the funds being transferred to us from SNH.
6. Of the seven services invited to apply for grant six have successfully applied. Agreed annual work programmes are now in place that meet their organisational needs and help to deliver the National Park Plan and national ranger policy. Discussions are

ongoing with Aberdeenshire Council who are currently unsure of the benefits of applying for grant.

7. It is a condition of grant support that these services provide six monthly reports, in a nationally agreed format, on key outcomes. By 2010 we will therefore be able to report on the collective work of ranger services in the National Park. This will better inform the coordination of activity across the National Park.
8. CNPA staff have provided support to ranger services throughout this process including:
  - a) Meetings with CNP ranger services to agree annual work programmes;
  - b) Development days at CNPA offices to update rangers on CNPA work and the National Park Plan (further days planned for autumn 2009); and
  - c) Regular attendance at the National Ranger Development Partnership.

### **Developing a Park Wide 'Family' of Ranger Services**

9. In taking this lead role we are starting to see moves toward our longer term vision of developing 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
10. Following the development days we have rangers who are more knowledgeable about the CNP and the role of CNPA, and more able to communicate this to others. We are also getting more regular feedback on access issues. In addition, the work undertaken by several services in delivering the Junior Ranger Programme this summer was an exemplar of coordinated working.
11. The development of a fully effective coordinated family of ranger services is a long term process. It requires coordination between all ranger services in the Park and not just those in receipt of CNPA grant funding (see Annex 1). Taking this forward there are several areas of work that need to be progressed in the next year:
  - a) Greater use of the CNP Brand by ranger services (agreed by Board 2007);
  - b) Development of Equality and Diversity Statements (National Policy);
  - c) National Reporting on output and outcomes linked to National Park Plan (National Policy and CNPA Grant condition); and
  - d) Development of concordats with services not receiving ranger grant; NTS Mar Lodge, Cairngorm and Forestry Commission Scotland (agreed by Board 2007)
12. **It is recommended that the Board notes the work undertaken since May 2008 in developing a coordinated approach to ranger services in the National Park.**

### **Rothiemurchus Ranger Service**

13. It has long been recognised that Rothiemurchus Estate is an area of outstanding natural heritage. Its close proximity to Aviemore and easy access presents great

opportunities for people to experience, enjoy and appreciate the special qualities of the area. This combination presents visitor management challenges which the Estate seek to address proactively.

14. Public funding to support delivery of a range of public benefits on Rothiemurchus Estate has previously been directed through an SNH Management Agreement, and on its termination in 2007, an interim agreement funded by SNH and CNPA. That interim agreement came to an end at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008.
15. The interim agreement secured delivery of outputs for biodiversity, interpretation and environmental education and visitor infrastructure. The funding was not specifically for a ranger service, although the Estate chose to employ rangers as the most effective way to deliver some of these outputs. As the estate had not received SNH ranger grant there was no transfer of ranger grant from SNH to CNPA in 2009.
16. In the meantime Rothiemurchus Estate has successfully applied for a Rural Development Contract (RDC) under the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). During the application stage it was unclear what visitor management activity an RDC would support on Rothiemurchus Estate. It was therefore unclear whether the Estate would wish to apply for a CNPA ranger grant. In the expectation that the Estate may apply for ranger grant, provision was made for an application in the current operational plan.
17. The Rural Development Contract provides a funding contribution to delivering public benefits through forest management, focused on conserving and enhancing the condition of the forest through habitat and visitor management. The contract does not provide funding for the ranger service. The estate has chosen, however, to use rangers to deliver some of the agreed outputs.
18. The CNPA ranger grant application identifies three key areas of work for ranger services to deliver on (see Annex 3, 'Ranger Aims'). The work carried out by the ranger service under the Rural Development Contract will cover only a small proportion of these. In addition, that contract covers only the forest area of the estate. There is therefore capacity for the CNPA to provide funding to the ranger service to deliver a much wider range of public benefits. This could include for example:
  - a) *Ensuring a warm welcome and providing support for people to enjoy the outdoors* - e.g. promoting opportunities for enjoyment of the area, community outreach work, managing visitor facilities etc.
  - b) *Increasing awareness, understanding, care and responsible use of the natural and cultural heritage* - e.g. developing educational materials, working with volunteers and community based groups, promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code etc.
  - c) *Supporting the sustainable management and use of the outdoors to meet a range of social, economic and environmental objectives* - e.g. site management and monitoring, maintaining access infrastructure, working with neighbouring estates etc.

19. Discussions with Rothiemurchus Estate indicate that they wish to apply for a ranger grant to contribute to work delivering benefits that are not funded through the Rural Development Contract. In order to offer grant the CNPA would need to ensure that:
  - a) It would not constitute funding of a new ranger service. This would be in breach of previously agreed principles;
  - b) Ranger grant was not being used to fund activity already grant aided through SRDP; and
  - c) An ongoing commitment to a ranger service at Rothiemurchus is the best use of CNPA funds to deliver the National Park Plan.
20. The ranger service at Rothiemurchus has been integral to our work with ranger services since the inception of the National Park. On this basis we do not consider this an application for ranger grant from a new service. Nor do we consider that an application is being made to increase the service. Any application from the estate would be subject to the same terms and conditions as other ranger grant applications.
21. The ranger activity **not** grant aided by SRDP will form the basis of a written application for ranger grant with agreed monitoring. To approve a grant we need to be sure that we are not funding activity that is already grant aided. It is also in the interests of Rothiemurchus Estate to be able to demonstrate clear separation between the two grants.
22. Previous public support for Rothiemurchus Estate has recognised its importance in delivering public benefits. Grant aid from CNPA will ensure that these benefits continue to be delivered in the context of the Park Plan. It will also ensure that rangers at Rothiemurchus are part of a co-ordinated Park wide 'family' of ranger services.
23. £24,000 was allocated in the current Operational Plan to support the equivalent of two full time staff for a year. This figure is consistent with other applications for ranger grant from private estates in the National Park. A successful ranger grant application would therefore be awarded for the remaining 18 months of our Corporate Plan, subject to meeting agreed outputs. This would commit CNPA to £36,000 until March 2011. From April 2011 all services receiving ranger grant from CNPA will need to reapply.
24. We consider that a successful application for ranger grant by Rothiemurchus Estate and subsequent delivery of an agreed work programme will assist significantly in delivery of the National Park Plan.
25. **It is recommended that the Board approves, in principle, CNPA offering a ranger grant to Rothiemurchus Estate for the duration of the current Corporate Plan.**

### Consultation

26. This paper will also be considered by Finance Committee in their role in approving expenditure.

## **Policy Context**

27. The Board previously agreed (2007) the role that rangers have to play in the delivery of the National Park Plan.

## **Next Steps**

28. If approved, by both CNPA Board and Finance Committee, officers will work with Rothiemurchus Estate to progress a ranger grant application.
29. The Board will be informed again of progress in developing a coordinated approach to ranger services in summer 2010 at which time we will have outputs from the first year of CNPA grant aid.

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**12 August 2009**  
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## **Annex I - Publically Supported Ranger Services in the National Park**

- I. There are 12 publicly funded ranger services within the Cairngorms National Park. The table below shows each of these ranger services and:
- a) the number of full-time equivalent rangers operating within the Park area; and
  - b) The body providing grant support to them.

<b>Ranger Service</b>	<b>No. Ranger Posts</b> <i>(Full Time Equivalents)</i>	<b>Grant Support</b>
Aberdeenshire Council	0.4	
Angus Glens (Angus Council)	2	CNPA Ranger Grant
Balmoral Estate	2.6	CNPA Ranger Grant
Cairngorm Mountain (HIE)	1.5	HIE Funded
Crown Estate Glenlivet	1.4	CNPA Ranger Grant
Explore Abernethy	0.75	CNPA Ranger Grant
Forestry Commission Scotland	2.4	FCS Funded
Glen Tanar Charitable Trust	1.6	CNPA Ranger Grant
Highland Council	2	CNPA Ranger Grant
NTS Mar Lodge Estate	1.5	SNH National Concordat
Rothiemurchus	2	
Speyside Way (Moray Council)	1.5	CNPA Speyside Way Grant

## Annex 2 - 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.