

**Draft Minute of the Meeting of the Ranger Service Working Group  
Held in Gordon Hotel, Tomintoul  
On 14 May 2004 at 10.30**

**Present:**

Richard Stroud (Chair)	CNPA Board Member
Eric Baird	CNPA Board Member
Sally Dowden	CNPA Board Member
Willie McKenna	CNPA Board Member

Murray Ferguson	Head of Visitor Services and Recreation
Pete Crane	Visitor Services Officer

**Welcome**

**Action**

1. Richard Stroud welcomed Pete Crane to the Working Group.

**Apologies**

2. There were no apologies.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting**

3. Nic Bullivant, Cairngorm Ranger Service, had commented that the Cairngorms Ranger Group was still in existence and not 'former'. It was agreed to amend the minutes accordingly. No other changes were required. Minutes were adopted.

**Matter Arising**

4. The interim results of the Cairngorm National Park Visitor Survey were circulated. The final report will be available early June and the findings will be widely disseminated to all interested parties. The interim results indicate that Ranger bases are a significant point of contact for visitors, attracting some 26 % of all visitors to the area.
5. Pete Crane reported on the distribution of the Countryside Events Leaflet and the press coverage that had been received. It was agreed that efforts should be made to get the information onto appropriate websites and to clarify the information that ranger services were expected to monitor for review purposes.
6. Murray Ferguson and Eric Baird circulated information compiled by the Cairngorms Ranger Group and SNH on the various ranger services within the National Park. This formed the basis for the discussion under Review of Ranger Services within in the National Park.
7. The Working Group agreed to thank all those ranger services who helped compile the audit of Ranger Services within the National Park.

**PC**

8. It was agreed that further useful information about the issues arising in the area would be available from the reports of the annual meetings of ranger services in the Cairngorms that had taken place over the last few years. Pete Crane agreed to extract any useful information from the proceedings and to incorporate it in the Review.

## Review of Ranger Services in the National Park

9. Murray Ferguson stated that the SCRA audit and information from SNH confirmed that the provision of ranger services in the National Park is complex. There are a variety of employers including public sector (local government, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and Forestry Commission Scotland), private sector (traditional estates) and voluntary sector (charities). Funding varies with most services, but not all, gaining some assistance from SNH.
10. There appear to be differences in what each service provides and some gaps in provision. There are also geographic gaps in the provision of ranger services.
11. Murray Ferguson confirmed that CNPA had a directory of both employers of ranger services and employees.
12. A variety of views were expressed about the roles that ranger services could play in the management of the Cairngorms National Park. The Group noted the change in emphasis that was being required by SNH to encourage ranger services to become actively involved in helping the public and land managers to behave responsibly under the terms of the new Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The Group agreed that there was a need to develop:-
- A clear understanding of the current range and extent of ranger services
  - A clear vision of the services required in the Cairngorm National Park
  - An action plan, agreed with partners, to implement any necessary changes
13. It was agreed that the development of a Park-wide provision would require the involvement of employers, employees and funding bodies. It was recognised that employers may need to see tangible benefits to encourage them to be involved in a Park-wide provision. It was also clear that there is considerable scope for the sharing of best practice and training needs throughout the Park.

## Proposed Work Plan (6 months)

14. Pete Crane outlined a proposed work plan for the next six months. The plan summarised work that was divided into four broad phases as follows:-
- Relationship Building and Information Gathering
  - Early Delivery (ongoing projects)
  - Finding out what other organisations do
  - Developing a strategy

These phases would not be discrete and would run concurrently.

15. In discussion MF reported that CNPA had offered grant aid to the Explore Abernethy Ranger Service for one year only on the basis that this was an established ranger service that had a good track record and which had particular funding difficulties in this year because of withdrawal of MBSE funds. The project managers had been made aware that they should investigate other sources of funding for years 2 and 3 of their project proposal.
16. The Group discussed the proposed work plan in detail and emphasised the following points:-
  - The need to make personal contact with the ranger services at an early stage
  - The need to develop a strategy for ranger services in advance of making decisions that would set precedents
  - The need to look outwith national parks for examples of best practice and to make sure that any lessons learned about good and bad practice in the deployment of ranger services were applied sensitively and imaginatively in order to meet the particular requirements of the Cairngorms
17. Richard Stroud commented that the plan was ambitious and may require input from consultants to achieve outputs in a reasonable timescale. It was agreed that this should be considered once the true scale of the task was understood at the end of phase one.
18. Willie McKenna requested that links to other Working Groups particularly Access and Tourism should be made clear.
19. The Group agreed that once the work plan was amended that it should be circulated to ranger services as appropriate.

## **AOCB**

20. In response to a query it was reported that a number of ranger services made use of volunteers. It was noted that while there were sensitivities concerned with the use of volunteers, the practical benefits for individuals in terms of gaining experience and confidence in countryside management were considerable. It was agreed that the use of volunteers was an issue that should be revisited at a future stage in CNPA's work on ranger services.

## **Dates for next meetings**

21. Friday 30 July in Tomintoul.
22. Friday 27 August in Nethy Bridge.
23. Friday 22 October in Kingussie.