

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
FINANCE COMMITTEE**

FOR DECISION

**Title: RATIFICATION OF TRANSFER OF GRANT AID
FUNCTION FOR RANGER SERVICES IN THE
NATIONAL PARK**

Prepared by: Pete Crane, Senior Visitor Services Officer

Purpose

To approve the detailed transfer of the grant-aid function for ranger services from SNH to Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Recommendations

That the Finance Committee:

- a) Approve the transfer of the grant aid function for ranger services in the Cairngorms National Park from SNH to CNPA, including the one-off transfer of £120,000 which henceforth will be part of the CNPA budget settlement.

Executive Summary

The Board of the CNPA has previously agreed that CNPA should take on the discretionary ranger grant function from SNH, subject any proposal not reducing the overall public support for ranger services and detailed approval by the Finance Committee. This paper provides an update on changes National Ranger policy, details the grant transfer involved and recommends that the Finance Committee approve the transfer of the function.

RATIFICATION OF TRANSFER OF GRANT AID FUNCTION FOR RANGER SERVICES IN THE NATIONAL PARK – FOR DECISION

Background

1. Following the work of the Ranger Working Group, consultation with ranger service managers, an independent review, Board discussions and formal papers the Board agreed in November 2007 to:

“...approve the transfer of the grant-aid function for ranger services from SNH to the Cairngorms National Park Authority, subject to any settlement not reducing the overall level of public support for ranger services in the National Park, and final approval by the Finance Committee”.

2. This work is a key part of the Priority for Action on Promoting Awareness and Understanding of the National Park in the National Park Plan and particularly the following action:

3a	Develop a cohesive approach to management of ranger services that meets needs of visitors, land managers and communities and of the National Park.	CNPA, Land Managers, Ranger Services, SNH, VS
----	--	---

3. As has been previously agreed by the Board, greater direct influence from CNPA over the work programmes of ranger services will also assist in the delivery of many other outcomes in the National Park Plan particularly in the following Priorities:
 - a) Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access;
 - b) Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes; and
 - c) Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable.

Policy Changes since November 2007

4. Since November 2007 Scottish Government has announced that all ‘long term’ grants from SNH to local authorities will, from April 2009, form part of the direct grant in aid to Local Authorities. This means that grants that SNH had previously given for ranger services, Long Distance Routes, etc. will form part of the general settlement to Local Authorities. However, this decision will not apply in the National Park if CNPA agree to take on the discretionary grant for ranger services (see below).
5. In February 2008 a new national policy statement for rangers was presented to the SNH Board. A draft has been sent to CNPA for comment and this is compatible with the aims of ranger services in the National Park as agreed by the CNPA Board in March 2007. Also, in February 2007 the SNH Board agreed to the transfer of discretionary grant for rangers in the National Park to CNPA, and that ranger grants in Scotland would be maintained against a general requirement to reduce overall SNH grants by 10%.

6. Officers of CNPA and SNH met in March 2008 to discuss the detail of the proposed transfer. We have also met twice with Scottish Countryside Rangers Association and key partners (SNH, Loch Lomond National Park Authority, Forestry Commission Scotland, Historic Scotland and National Trust for Scotland) to assist in coordinating the new ranger policy across Scotland.

Current public sector support for Ranger Services

7. Table 1 below shows the current levels of SNH grant to rangers services in the Cairngorms National Park.

Table 1 SNH Grant-aid for Ranger Services in the National Park

Ranger Service	Rangers working in CNP (FTE)	SNH Discretionary Grant per year (£)	SNH liaison time days/year
Aberdeenshire Council	0.4	4,100	2
Highland Council	2	20,500	8
Angus Council	2	20,500	1.5 *
Balmoral Estate	2.6	29,100	2
Glentinar Estate	1.6	17,900	2
Glenlivet Estate	1.2	16,150	2
Explore Abernethy	0.7	8,400	3
Totals	10.5	116,650	20.5

* SNH spend a further 20 days liaising with Angus Glen Ranger Service over work associated with the management of Corrie Fee National Nature Reserve.

8. It should be noted that SNH only provide grant aid to seven of the 12 services in the National Park that receive public support. Table 2 shows the public funding support for the five ranger services that do not receive SNH ranger grant and the mechanisms available to influence their work to deliver the National Park Plan.

Table 2 Public Sector support for ranger services that are not funded by SNH grant-aid

Ranger Service	Employer	Public Funder	Mechanism to encourage NPP Delivery
Cairngorm Mountain	Highlands & Islands Enterprise/ Cairngorm Mountain	HIE	Concordat
Forestry Commission Scotland	Forestry Commission Scotland	Forestry Commission Scotland	Concordat

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Finance Committee Paper 3 16/05/08

Ranger Service	Employer	Public Funder	Mechanism to encourage NPP Delivery
Rothiemurchus	Rothiemurchus Estate	SNH & CNPA through a management agreement linked to the Rothiemurchus Concordat. *	Management Agreement
Speyside Way	Moray Council	Within the National Park CNPA fund the Long Distance Route and therefore the ranger service.	Management Agreement
National Trust for Scotland (Mar Lodge)	National Trust for Scotland	SNH as part of a National Concordat with NTS	Management Agreement

** Future public support for public benefits on Rothiemurchus Estate is likely to move from a Management Agreement, funded by CNPA and SNH, to a public funding stream under the Scotland Rural Development Programme. The mechanism for funding the work of ranger services, which forms part of the current interim Management Agreement, is subject to ongoing discussions led by Hamish Trench, Head of Heritage and Land Management Group.*

9. The five ranger services listed in Table 2 would not be directly affected by the proposed transfer of function. All of them indicated that they wish to work toward better coordination of rangers across the National Park and are willing to work toward delivering key actions in the National Park Plan.

10. Any future inclusion of Highland Perthshire into the National Park is likely to bring Atholl Estates Ranger Service and part of Perth and Kinross Ranger Service into the 'Cairngorms family'. Both services currently receive SNH grant. However, it is likely that by the time the boundary changes that the grant to Perth and Kinross ranger service will form part of their general settlement. Therefore, the grant aid for Perth and Kinross ranger service within an enlarged National Park should form part of the future discussions with Scottish Government over the implications of expanding the boundary.

Implications of Transferring Ranger Grant

11. SNH has agreed to the transfer of full ranger grant plus an additional £3,000 to cover the cost of SNH administration of the grant. Nationally, SNH have also stated that ranger grant will be maintained (not increased). This means that transferring grant now will not reduce the overall level of public support for rangers in the National Park.
12. If approved the grant aid function would formally transfer on 1st April 2009 with CNPA negotiating work programmes with services from autumn 2008. With the completion of the Outdoor Access Strategy and Core Path Planning process we have identified that there will be capacity within the outdoor access team in Visitor Services and Recreation Group to take on the role of negotiating work programmes and better co-ordinating the services across the National Park.
13. As the requirements of the November 2007 Board paper have been met we recommend that the Finance Committee:
 - a) approve the transfer of the grant aid function for ranger services in the Cairngorms National Park from SNH to CNPA, including the one-off transfer of £120,000 which henceforth will be part of the CNPA budget settlement.

PETE CRANE

May 2008

petecrane@cairngorms.co.uk