
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: 2021/22 BUDGET: RANGER SERVICES

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Purpose

This paper seeks the Board approval to establish a Seasonal Ranger Service for the 2021 calendar year.

This is a stage point decision within the wider service development and 2021/22 budget process, required at this point in time to facilitate development of a core service capacity in time for the anticipated commencement of the visitor management season at end March / early April 2020.

Recommendations

The Board is requested to:

- a) **Approve a commitment of £236,000 to finance a seasonal ranger service to start by 22 March 2021 and operate until 31 October 2021 .**
- b) **Approve a further commitment of £3,000 to augment the Seasonal Ranger Service with five ‘Kickstart’ Youth Placement opportunities for young people seeking a start in this employment sector.**
- c) **Agree that should the budget settlement communicated on 28 January show a significant reduction in the Authority’s funding for the coming year – a reduction in grant in aid in excess of 5% - the management team will postpone the development of these services and bring the service initiative back as part of the full budget proposals for consideration in March.**
- d) **Note the Kickstart commitment minimum of £3,000 may rise to £30,000: that increase if required to be confirmed as part of the main budget consideration by the Board in March.**

Background

- I. The Board considered a Cairngorms Visitor Management Review at its meeting in November 2020.
[200911CNPA BdPaper3AAVisitorManagementPaperVI.0.pdf \(cairngorms.co.uk\)](https://www.cairngorms.co.uk/200911CNPA BdPaper3AAVisitorManagementPaperVI.0.pdf)

2. In consideration of this paper, the Board noted:
 - a) A seasonal ranger service consisting of nine seasonal rangers plus management was established for the first time in 2020.
 - b) Highly positive feedback on the value added by this service to the National Park.
 - c) The Authority would progress development for a ranger service to complement existing ranger services in the Cairngorms for commencement in 2021.
 - d) The final shape of a Cairngorms NPA Ranger Service would be drawn together following confirmation of the Scottish Government budget and awareness from that of the grant-in-aid allocation to the Authority for the coming financial year.
3. This paper seeks a decision by the Board on establishing a seasonal ranger service for 2021. This is a stage point in the overall development of a permanent CNPA Ranger service. This first stage decision is required at this time in order to have a core element of service in place for the commencement of the visitor management season.

Establishing a 2021 Ranger Services

4. Easter weekend falls in 2021 on the weekend of 2 April. Despite the ongoing and currently tightened COVID restrictions, we continue to expect the Easter weekend to present the start point of a busy Visitor Management season in 2021.
5. The Scottish Government budget process has been delayed from December 2020 until 28 January 2021. The Board will consider the Authority's full budget for the 2021/22 Financial Year as planned at its meeting scheduled for 12 March.
6. In light of these various circumstances, we propose to develop and implement a Ranger Service, subject to Board approval, over two phases:
 - a) Phase 1: secure a seasonal ranger service to operate from mid March until end October 2021. The decision point set out in this current paper.
 - b) Phase 2: determine the full permanent and seasonal ranger complement which is affordable when considered within the resource envelope established by the 2021/22 budget and grant in aid levels. This decision will be scoped and sought from the Board as part of the budget decisions in March 2021.

Seasonal Ranger Service

7. Officers have developed a Ranger Service development timetable which seeks to have seasonal and management staff in post and commencing work in week commencing 22 March. As with the 2020 Seasonal Ranger Service development, this allows for a short period of staff training before full commencement of service. This timetable requires internal recruitment decisions to be made by early in week commencing 25 January to enable external recruitment to commence by the end of that week in order to secure remaining staff required by mid-March.
8. We propose a team of 8 seasonal rangers plus a ranger manager is established by mid-March. This matches the scale of the team deployed in 2020, and will again be added to by the Ranger employed through the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project under a single

Ranger team structure while retaining the Capercaillie Project objectives for this ranger within their deployment.

9. The deployment of a Seasonal Ranger Service requires a budget commitment of £236,000 as set out in the following table. This is an increase in cost against the provision agreed by the Board in June 2020 for the Seasonal Ranger Service in 2020 as there is an additional period of service cover of around 14 weeks, commencing mid-March rather than late June.

	£000
Seasonal Ranger staffing and management, including employer costs of National Insurance and Pension contributions	217
Operational budget provision	10
Vehicles provision	9
Total costs	236

10. A commitment in advance of the final budget decision to allocate £236k in financial provision to a seasonal ranger service is therefore required at this point if we are to recruit required staff and have them in place prior to Easter. Such a commitment will clearly limit other potential flexibilities when the full budget is considered in March. As “new” rather than continuing provision, this sum will represent a top-slice of resources available to finance the operational plan for 2021/22.
11. The Management Team recommend that these resources are approved for commitment in 2021/22 at this time to enable provision of a Ranger Service that will maintain and build on the positive impacts achieved by the Cairngorms NPA Rangers over the summer and autumn of 2020.

Kickstart Work Placements For Young People

12. The Management Team are also in the process of drawing up plans for the recruitment and deployment of 5 Ranger Service work placements for young people under the “Kickstart” scheme, for which funding has been secured through a collective UK National Parks bid. The idea of a collective bid for Kickstart funding by UK National Parks was proposed by Cairngorms NPA and agreed by the network. North Yorkshire Moors NPA has taken on the lead role for the application and there are good relationships on this project with them.
13. Should the Board agree the resource commitment to implement a seasonal ranger service, the Authority can also progress with the plans to offer five youth work placements to augment the service and provide five young people with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience in this sector.
14. Kickstart grant covers National Minimum Wage of £8.91 per hour for a 25 hour week. As a minimum, the Authority would employ at the Scottish Living Wage which will cost around £3,000 more than grant cover available. Additionally, as we develop the service, we will consider augmenting the 25 hour week creating roles at the Authority’s standard 37.5 hour working week. The maximum cost enhancement is estimated at around £30,000. However, management will tailor those decisions to

affordability as information on budget emerges over the course of the next few months.

15. The initial commitment to establishing a 'Kickstart' Ranger Youth Employment team is therefore a minimum of £3,000 which may rise to £30,000: that increase if required to be confirmed as part of the main budget consideration by the Board in March.

Risk Management

16. Should the budget settlement communicated on 28 January show a significant reduction in the Authority's funding for the coming year – a reduction in grant in aid in excess of 5% - the management team will postpone the development of these services and bring the service initiative back as part of the full budget proposals for consideration in March. This will clearly lose the potential to provide ranger cover over the March to June period of the year.

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