

**Draft Minute of the First Meeting of the Ranger Service Working Group
Held in the CNPA Office, Ballater
On 27 February 2004 at 9.00am**

Present:

Eric Baird	CNPA Board Member
Sally Dowden	CNPA Board Member
Willie McKenna	CNPA Board Member
Richard Stroud	CNPA Board Member
Murray Ferguson	Head of Visitor Services and Recreation

In attendance:

Peter Argyle	CNPA Board Member
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Selection of the Chair

Action

1. Murray Ferguson welcomed members to the meeting. Following discussion, Richard Stroud was unanimously elected as Chairman and continued to conduct the remainder of the meeting.

Discussion of purpose and short term outputs

2. Murray Ferguson had previously circulated an extract from a Board paper from October 2003 which stated the Purpose and Short-term Outputs of the Working Group.
3. Sally Dowden suggested changing the name of the Working Group to reflect the wide variety of services that could be delivered by rangers and others who provided similar services for visitors. Following discussion, members agreed that the current name of the Group was adequate but that it would be appropriate to consider as part of the work programme how ranger services fitted with other services provided to visitors and land managers. In time the work of the Group may evolve and a change of name could be considered.
4. The purpose of the Working Group as suggested by the Board was considered. In discussion the following points emerged:
 - Members of the Group had a different understanding of the current level of ranger service provision and it would be necessary to reach a shared understanding before significant progress could be made. The audit that had been undertaken by the former Cairngorms Rangers Group would be useful as a starting point.
 - SNH had a ranger service policy at a national level with specific aims for rangers that applied to each of the Ranger Services that they funded.

- Some of the ways in which ranger services were currently administered involved a considerable amount of paperwork and administration. It would be good if this could be reduced or minimised in the future.
- Some valuable information about visitors' experiences in using ranger services was contained in the report of the interim visitor survey which Debbie Strang was coordinating.
- Several annual meetings of ranger services in the Cairngorms had taken place since the late 1990s and there may be worthwhile material in the minutes or reports of these meetings.
- Consideration would have to be given to the provision of ranger services across the boundary of the National Park.

Action

5. Murray Ferguson agreed to arrange for circulation of the relevant material in due course.
6. The Group agreed to change the Purpose of the Working Group slightly to read (new words are underlined):

“To formulate, agree and then implement with partners arrangements for the provision of a cohesive Cairngorms National Park-wide approach to ranger services which meets the requirements of the Cairngorms National Park aims.”

MF

7. The Short Term Output that had been set by the Board was considered. MF informed the Group that, earlier that week, the post of Visitor Services Officer had been offered to Peter Crane, who currently worked as Countryside Officer and Country Park Manager with Fife Council. It was expected that Peter (who would be leading most of the work in relation to ranger services and other visitor services) would start work in late April.
8. It was agreed that the timescale for the statement of short-term outputs required to be amended and this should be discussed at the next meeting of the Working Group. The statement currently reads:

“To produce a report to the CNPA Board by [end of April] setting out specific proposals for implementation so as to produce a more coordinated and harmonised ranger service for the Cairngorms National Park.”

Consideration of external interests to join the Working Group

9. A variety of views were expressed about the desirability of involving others in the Working Group at this stage. Some members favoured early inclusion of wide range of interested parties. Others suggested that the Working Group members should have the opportunity to refine their own thinking about the current level of ranger service provision and how it was delivered before the Group was opened up to others.

10. It was agreed that inclusion of external parties would take place in due course once the Group had got under way. It was agreed that in inviting others to participate, the Working Group should be sensitive the need to liase with ranger service managers in the first instance.

AOCB

11. No other items of competent business were raised.

Action

Dates of next meetings

12. Murray Ferguson reported that he had been advised to chart out as many dates as possible to avoid clashes of dates and allow for other Board Members to attend. The Group favoured the slot following the Planning Committee meetings (which are held every second Friday) but timed so as not to clash with Access Working Group meetings.
13. Murray Ferguson to arrange a schedule of dates for the remainder of the calendar year with the next meeting to take place in around six weeks.

MF

The meeting finished at 10:10