



Cairngorms
NATIONAL PARK
Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh



Environmental Volunteering in the Cairngorms National Park: Opportunities and Potential

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Executive Summary

The report sets out a number of recommendations for ways in which CNPA can better coordinate environmental volunteering opportunities that contribute towards the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP). Some of these are “resource light” and could be implemented fairly quickly and easily, whilst others are “resource heavy”, requiring long-term investment. The recommendations include:

- An existing member of CNPA staff acting in a brokering role to direct potential volunteers to the organisations most suited to their interests and abilities.
- Development of a Park-wide system for organisations to collect accurate data on the annual numbers of volunteers they receive.
- Establishment of several large-scale, long-term projects on specific sites based on CNAP objectives that would be suitable for various levels of volunteer commitment.
- Establishment of community-based volunteer groups that would meet regularly to carry out voluntary projects.
- A team of Volunteer Rangers recruited, trained and managed by CNPA and operating at multiple sites.

These recommendations were based on the following findings:

- Lack of time and resources was the most commonly-cited barrier to the further recruitment of volunteers. This was in particular due to perceived time constraints created by health and safety/risk assessment considerations.
- A lack of organisations primarily requiring volunteers with specific skills, although there are a number who may occasionally offer such opportunities.
- A prevalence of volunteers from outside the National Park volunteering on a short-term, residential basis.
- A lack of local volunteers and a difficulty in recruiting them. There are very few community-based environmental volunteering opportunities.
- A correlation between population centres with organisations nearby offering environmental volunteering opportunities, and number of volunteers from those population centres involved in environmental volunteering. Grantown, Carrbridge and Blair Atholl were especially lacking in opportunities/volunteers.
- A lack of environmental volunteering opportunities in the Perth and Kinross part of the National Park.
- It was almost impossible to find accurate data on annual numbers of volunteers within each organisation, although the figures presented here are sufficient to reflect general trends. The report found that there are just over two thousand people involved in environmental volunteering in the National Park, across around twenty-five organisations.
- Most organisations had not made specific efforts to align their voluntary activities with the aims of CNPA or the CNAP, although in many cases their own aims are similar in practice.

The report also contains the following significant findings:

- A prevalence of ongoing projects suitable for individuals to become involved with, but also a significant number of organisations suitable for involving groups of volunteers for one-off, specific projects.
- Among organisations, the most common motivations for taking on volunteers were advocacy, the completion of large-scale tasks, and the provision of opportunities for those looking to pursue a career in conservation or ranger work.
- A prevalence of organisations focused on practical conservation tasks in their environmental volunteering opportunities. Other activities can mostly be categorised into wildlife recording and visitor engagement.
- A large proportion of volunteers are retired people in the 60+ age category. This reflects Europe-wide trends in environmental volunteering.

Definition of key terms

Volunteering

A literature review in 2007 by the Institute for Volunteering Research defines volunteering using Davis-Smith's (2000) definition. This report will consider these definitions and use the following key criteria:

- It should not be undertaken for financial gain.
- It should be undertaken in an environment of genuine freewill.
- There should be identifiable beneficiaries or a beneficiary.

It became immediately apparent, however, that when investigating "volunteering" within the Cairngorms National Park, the scope of this project needed to be narrowed down.

Environmental volunteering

The term "Environmental volunteering" has therefore been used throughout this project in order to narrow the focus. A 2007 report commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) defines "volunteering in the natural heritage" as "Activities which encourage and support the conservation and improvement of, education and learning about, access to, and enjoyment of the countryside, coastal waters and green spaces around cities and towns". This definition is interchangeable with that of "environmental volunteering". It is any voluntary activity that potentially contributes to the aims of the Cairngorms National Park.

Volunteer -taking organisation

This refers to any organisation that involves volunteers - in this case, *environmental* volunteers – in its work.

The natural outdoors

This refers to settings that are perceived to be "wild" or "natural", such as mountain, forest, marine or riparian environments. The word "natural" helps to distinguish environmental volunteering from other voluntary activities that take place outdoors, such as those focused on sport.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP)

A Management Plan setting out the key objectives of the Cairngorms National Park with regard to biodiversity management in the period 2013-2018.

1. Introduction

The Cairngorms National Park is the UK's largest National Park. It is an outstanding, unique environment celebrated for the extensive subarctic plateau forming Britain's highest and most extensive mountain range, the country's largest native forests, a scattering of spectacularly clean rivers and lochs, and large areas of moorland and working farmland. The Cairngorms are home to 1,200 species of regional, national and international significance, including capercaillie, golden eagle, wildcat and pine martens. It contains 25% of the UK's threatened animal and plant species, and 25% of all Scottish native woodlands.

A key aim of any National park, of course, is to engage people in, and educate them about, the natural heritage of a scenic area of National importance. By extension, this has huge potential to engage people in wider environmental and conservation issues – both to increase the effectiveness of these activities, and to foster a sense of environmental stewardship in their participants. Indeed, the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP), states that “we are all stewards of this extraordinary place”, and cites “involving people” as a major aim. Encouraging further involvement in environmental volunteering provides a key contribution towards this aim, as well as making major contributions towards Scottish Government targets of a healthier, better-educated and more environmentally-friendly Scotland.

At the commencement of this project, it was known that a number of organisations providing environmental volunteering opportunities existed within the National Park. There were many key details, however, that were not known, such as how many volunteers these organisations work with, where the work is done, what sort of work is done, and how co-ordinated it is. From previous correspondence, there was also evidence of a great deal of interest from individuals and groups in becoming involved in environmental volunteering in the CNP, but a lack of a clear procedure for directing them to opportunities. It also became apparent early on in the project that nearly all other UK National Parks have a clear system of recruiting volunteers and - at the very least – “signposting” them to the relevant organisations within their National Park.

The two main aims of this project, then, are as follows:

- A stakeholder analysis aiming to give a clear picture of what environmental volunteering opportunities there are in the National Park, with a particular focus regarding the actions in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP).
- To make recommendation as to how CNPA can best direct its efforts towards future co-ordination of environmental volunteering opportunities.

1.1. Rationale

The following sections explain the importance of this project, both to CNPA and for the wider aims of the Scottish Government.

1.1.1. Benefits of environmental volunteering

Involvement in voluntary activities, in particular those in a “natural outdoor” setting, has been widely shown to have many benefits to both volunteers and volunteer-taking organisations. These are discussed in greater detail in the literature review (Section 3.1), but can be summarised as follows:

- A major contribution to physical and mental health and well-being.
- Increased self-esteem, especially among unemployed and elderly people, due to a sense of fulfilling a productive role and contributing to a “good cause”.
- Increased social integration of marginal members of communities, and levels of connectedness within communities as a whole.
- Increased engagement with environmental and conservation issues.
- Learning new practical skills and, especially in young people, increasing employability.
- Advocacy and greater engagement for the volunteer-taking organisations, as well as for wider organisation such as National Parks.
- Many organisations are dependent on volunteers in order to operate at all.
- A tangible, measurable effect on the condition of the natural outdoors.

1.1.2. Cairngorms Nature Action Plan

A clear rationale for providing environmental volunteering opportunities within the National Park can be found in the “involving people” section of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP).

Volunteers in the National Park contribute to the following specific CNAP aims:

- 4.1: “Create, support and celebrate a network of ambassadors”
- 4.2(b): Improve public understanding and perception of estates and of what estate management and deliver in terms of biodiversity.
- 4.5: Help communities find ways to engage with, realise the benefit they get from, and have a say in the management of, local natural heritage assets.
- 4.6: Provide a wide range of opportunities for people to contribute to the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity of the Park.
- 4.6(b): Highlight and encourage volunteer participation in biological recording schemes.

Current volunteer involvement in the National Park already makes a significant contribution to these aims. This report, however, finds that this contribution can be greatly improved through better coordination by CNPA (see Sections 4.12 and 5).

1.1.3. Scottish Government National Outcomes

On a wider level, involving people in the National Park through environmental volunteering has the potential to contribute to the following Scottish Government National Outcomes (see

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcomes>):

- **3. We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation:** Environmental volunteering is a form of experiential education with many potential learning outcomes for those involved in it. There are, for example, organisations that focus on wildlife surveys and biodiversity recording, which are a form of “Citizen Science”. Carrying out practical conservation tasks, meanwhile, can lead to a variety of new skills being learned, as well as informal learning about biodiversity and conservation issues. For young people especially, this extra-curricular learning significantly increases employability.
- **6. We live longer, healthier lives:** Schemes such as TCV’s “Green Gym” (see section 3.1) show the physical and mental health benefits of environmental volunteering.
- **11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others:** Research also shows that volunteering has great benefits in terms of building social capital. It can also involve isolated members of communities who are otherwise unemployed and not playing an active role in community life.
- **12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations:** This is the most obvious link, since it is synonymous with the aims of the National park as a whole. Involving volunteers, however, will help to spread these values to many more people.
- **14. We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production:** Much has been written about the connection between active, first-hand experience of the natural outdoors, and a concern for the well-being of the environment as a whole. Volunteering, then, has real potential to foster a sense of environmental citizenship – that is, to facilitate engagement with environmental issues among its participants.

1.1.4. Current situation

The only pre-existing data on current volunteer numbers was a table compiled by CNPA showing the annual number of “ranger-supported volunteering days” taking place with each of the ranger services receiving funding from CNPA. The data were collected on a yearly basis starting in 2009. As will be discussed in Section 2, there are a number of potential inaccuracies with the data. On the whole, however, they do reflect general trends and act as a useful starting point. The data are presented in the following table and line graph:

Ranger Service	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Angus Glens	17.5	62.5	5.5	1
Balmoral	174	150	101	51
Explore Abernethy	129	193	307.5	216.5
Crown (Glenlivet)	114	183.5	222	74
Glen Tanar	250	135	125	62
Highland Council	58.5	36	10.5	32
Rothiemurchus	2.5	25	10	64
Atholl Estates		116	111	159.5

Figure 1: Table showing annual number of ranger-supported volunteer days with each of the CNPA-funded ranger services in the National Park.

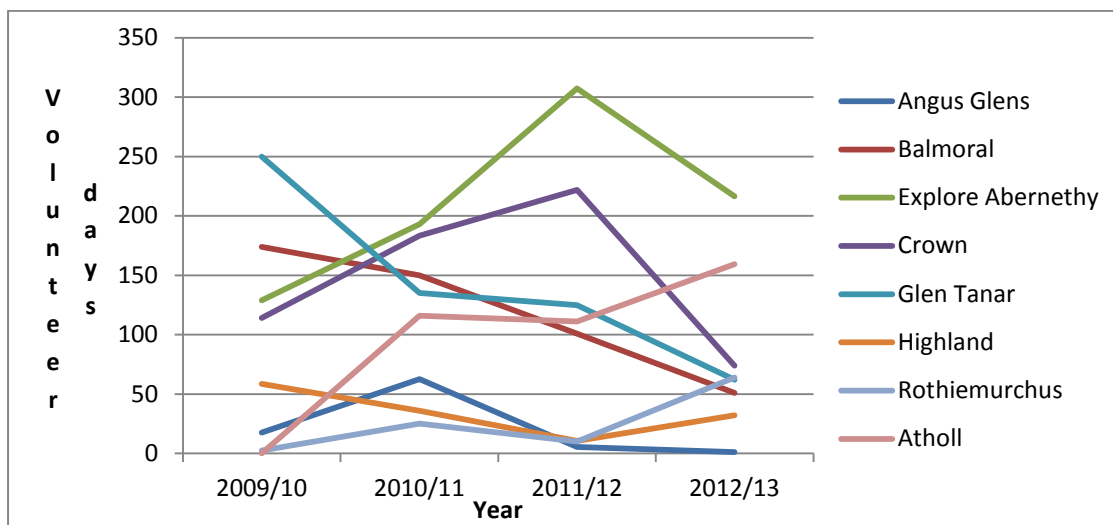


Figure 2: Line graph showing general trends in annual number of ranger-supported volunteer days with each of the CNPA-funded ranger services in the National Park.

The data provides evidence in support of this project in the following two key ways:

- **Decline in volunteer involvement:** Five of the eight ranger services show a marked decrease in volunteer involvement. Given that a key aim of the CNAP is to increase involvement of people in its activities, it is therefore important to ask: Why has volunteer involvement in many cases decreased? Are there increasing barriers to volunteer involvement and if so, how can these be overcome?
- **Limited data:** The fact that the numbers are restricted to only the ranger services financially supported by CNPA is in itself a justification for further investigation. In reality there are many other organisations within the National Park who offer, or have potential to offer, volunteering opportunities. Clearly there is work to be done in gaining a more accurate overall impression of the current situation regarding environmental volunteering within the National Park.

2. Research Methods

This section details the various stages of researching and writing this report. These stages overlapped at times, but on the whole, progressed in the following order:

2.1. Literature and context review

As a newcomer to CNPA with little prior knowledge of the various organisations and stakeholders operating within the National Park, my starting point was to carry out a general “context review”. During the first week of the project, I interviewed various members of staff within CNPA, as identified by my line manager. They, in turn, provided an overview of the organisations that, to their knowledge, provided environmental volunteering opportunities related to their area of expertise. Notes from initial meetings were extensive, but by the end of this period, there was sufficient overlap and repetition to indicate that my contact list now included all the volunteer-taking organisations known to CNPA staff.

The literature review was conducted using online resources such as Google Scholar, and the list of publications on the website of the Institute of Volunteering Research (IVR). This section identified certain general themes relating to environmental volunteering, which provided me with an overall context in which to situate my own findings.

2.2. Organisation Survey

This consisted of a number of stakeholder interviews, with participants initially selected on the recommendations of CNPA staff in the context review. On the recommendations of the people interviewed in this section, further contacts were, in turn, identified and interviewed. The survey highlighted not only organisations who currently offer environmental volunteering opportunities within the National park, but also those who did not, in order to identify possible reasons for their lack of volunteer involvement. In total, I spoke to representatives from around forty organisations. Most of these were site-specific and operating within the National Park. Some were based outside of the National Park but were involved (or interested in becoming involved) in environmental volunteering within it. These organisations are listed in section 4.1 and detailed in Appendix 1. Several samples of completed surveys are included in Appendix 2. Interviewees all answered a standardised set of questions, which are detailed below:

What current opportunities for environmental volunteering are there here?

This question was split into the following six sub-questions:

- **Location:** This aimed to determine where, in relation to the “base” of each organisation, the volunteering opportunities took place. Were they, for example, all within a five-minute walk of the ranger base? Or did they typically take place in a mountain setting, after walking for an hour or more to reach the site? They may also, in some cases, have been exclusively indoors, although this was expected to be rare.
- **What they do:** This aimed to give an idea of the most common types of activity that take place – for example, practical conservation tasks, or visitor engagement. This, in turn, could be measured against the CNAP to determine the extent to which voluntary activities are contributing to the current aims of the National Park.
- **When/how often?:** This question aimed to gain an idea as to whether there is any trend towards volunteers becoming involved, say, on a short-term basis for a week at a time, or on a long-term basis for one day per week. It also provided hints as to whether volunteering was something most commonly done by people looking for a “different” way to spend a week away, people who fit voluntary activities around a host of other commitments, or anything in between.
- **Who (demographic)?:** This aimed to give a general idea of primarily, the approximate age of the volunteers, as well as whether they lived in the local area or came from outwith the National Park.
- **How many volunteers?:** For such an apparently simple question, this question was, in most cases, surprisingly difficult to answer. This is explained in greater detail in section 2.4.
- **Why?:** This aimed to explore the motivations organisation have for taking on volunteers. Did they see volunteers simply as extra bodies to help them complete large-scale tasks? Or did they believe that engaging people in their work would help to “draw people in” to their overall conservation aims?

Is this carried out in partnership with any other organisation?

The purpose of this question was to determine the extent to which organisations work together within the National Park. It also had potential to highlight other organisations from outside the Park who may volunteer at certain sites within it.

Are any of the activities carried out done so as part of an agreement with CNPA?

This aimed to give an idea of the extent to which the aims of the Cairngorm Nature Action Plan were being deliberately addressed by organisations in their voluntary activities. Was every organisation fully aware of and committed to these aims, or were they largely unaware and simply pursuing their own agenda? It aimed to highlight ways in which CNAP can better work with organisations to achieve its aims and to facilitate environmental volunteering opportunities.

How do you recruit volunteers?

Through asking this question, I hoped to highlight ways in which CNPA could recruit volunteers in the future, or at least advise other organisations on how to do so. Did any organisation have a system for actively recruiting volunteers, or was volunteering all done on an informal, "reactionary" basis?

What do you offer the volunteer?

Were volunteers, for example, offered training in the use of equipment, free travel to and from sites, or simply new skills and experiences they could use in other areas of their lives? It was useful to know whether or not organisations had considered this, and by implication, how much they valued volunteer involvement. It also aimed to highlight some of the incentives offered by organisations that may contribute to greater volunteer involvement.

Are there any particular issues with working with volunteers?

This question was always elaborated upon so as to make clear its aims. The "issues" it aimed to uncover consisted of barriers to further volunteering (such as remoteness, financial constraints, lack

of suitable tasks for volunteers), as well as potential practical, in-the-field difficulties in working with volunteers once they have already been recruited.

Can you identify any further opportunities for environmental volunteering here?

The previous question always led to suggestions as to what CNPA could do in order to simplify the recruitment and retention of volunteers. If the interviewee *did* have more time, less paperwork, or a team of volunteers provided by CNPA, then what could they do at that particular site? The question also had potential to identify possible future projects for an expanded volunteer workforce in the National Park.

2.3. External organisations

As well as conducting surveys among organisations operating within the Cairngorms National Park, I attended the following two events in order to gain a wider perspective on current developments in environmental volunteering:

- **Youth Spaces:** This was a one-day event in Edinburgh organised by TCV, aiming to bring together members of organisations whose primary purpose is engaging young people in the natural outdoors. This enabled me to speak to organisations from external organisations who may be interested in carrying out environmental volunteering within the National Park. It also highlighted some of the barriers that would need to be overcome in order to facilitate their involvement, as well as ways in which this might be achieved.
- **UK National Parks Volunteer Co-ordinators meeting:** This is an annual event that brings together Volunteer Co-ordinators from all UK National Parks, giving them a chance to update their counterparts in other National Parks on developments within theirs. It presented me with an invaluable opportunity to ask each Volunteer Co-ordinator how they recruit, train and manage volunteers, and to what extent this is in cooperation with other organisations within their National Park. The meeting left me with the distinct impression that there is “no one right answer” and that due to various factors, each National Park has a different way of operating. It did, however, allow me to gain a whole range of ideas and perspectives that would inform this report. I also had a very useful telephone conversation with the departing Volunteer Coordinator of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, who was not present at the meeting.

2.4. Determining volunteer numbers – inaccuracies and caveats

As mentioned in Section 2.2, exact numbers of volunteers operating within the National Park were particularly difficult to determine. This section, however, details the methods that were used in order to gather the most accurate data possible. The data presented in Figures 1 and 2 was the closest thing I had to a “starting point” in terms of total numbers of people involved in environmental volunteering within the National park. The data *were* useful in that they appeared to reflect the following:

- A general decline in the number of ranger-led volunteer days. Given the aims of the CNAP (“involving people”), this trend enabled us to begin with a clear rationale for carrying out this project.
- Some trends in volunteer numbers for specific organisations that were confirmed in interviews. The figures for Angus Glens, for example, showed a decline to almost no volunteer involvement. This was blamed on the closure of Noranside prison, and the collapse of a partnership with social services in the wider Angus area. Similarly, at Explore Abernethy, volunteer days appeared to reach a peak followed by a sharp decline. This was apparently due to funding cuts, including the current “downsizing” of the ranger role to a seasonal position.

Reviewing the on-the-ground situation in person, however, also revealed the following inaccuracies with and limits to the data:

- **Figures limited to Ranger Services:** In reality there are many other organisations within the National Park who offer, or have potential to offer, volunteering opportunities.
- **Rothiemurchus figures:** The figures show a fairly low (if increasing) number of volunteer days at Rothiemurchus, who in reality are one of the biggest providers of volunteering opportunities in the whole of the National Park. In conversation, their Conservation Manager estimated that they take on around five hundred volunteers per year. It could also be that many of these volunteer days are not “ranger supported” – for example, where groups, with prior agreement with the estate management, turn up and carry out a task unsupervised.
- **Local Authority Ranger Services:** The figures for local authority ranger services do not necessarily apply only to the National Park, since part of the local authority areas lie outwith the National Park. This is most notable in Aberdeenshire, where the figures show a very high

number of volunteers supported by the ranger service. In reality, when speaking with one of their rangers, I found that no volunteering opportunities within the National Park exist directly with the ranger service. With local authority ranger services, perhaps the figures include organisations that exist within that area, but are not supported directly by rangers. This could be the case in Aberdeenshire, where there are various site-specific organisations such as Muir of Dinnet NNR and the RSPB's Crannach reserve.

- **Lack of data for Aberdeenshire:** Also in Aberdeenshire, the recording of volunteer numbers only began in 2012/13, making it impossible to detect any "trends".
- **Atholl Estate:** The data show a fairly high number of volunteer days at Atholl Estate. I was told that in fact, no volunteering opportunities are offered to the wider public there. They have, however, worked with Wilderness Scotland on a college placement programme, and on a Scouts International "Jamborette" that takes place every two years, where participants carry out a small amount of voluntary work. This could explain the figures, which do not reflect groups specifically there for the purposes of volunteering.

In reviewing in person the on-the-ground situation, I attempted to gain a more accurate impression of the number of volunteers. Here, I decided to focus on the number of *volunteers*, rather than volunteer *days*, for several reasons:

- It was unclear whether one "volunteer day" referred to one day attended by many volunteers, or whether each time one volunteer attended such an event was counted as AB "day".
- Several "volunteer days" could account for the same volunteer. If there were, say, twenty volunteer days recorded by a ranger service, this could mean that there are twenty volunteers attending for one day each, or one volunteer attending for twenty days. I considered it important to gain a clearer picture in this respect.
- In asking about the volunteers, rather than simply focusing on their time commitments, I could focus more on the demographic of the volunteers themselves. This included important information such as whether they are regular volunteers who live in the local area, or "one-off" residential volunteers who spend, say, one week with the organisation.

Attempting to determine total numbers of volunteers highlighted the following general caveats:

- **Lack of accurate records:** In most cases, no records had been made as to the number of volunteers with any given organisation. Indeed, there were several suggestions that, although they probably reflected general trends, the numbers of “ranger-supported volunteer days” recorded in Figure 1 was in many cases an educated guess.
- **What is a “volunteer”?:** There was a degree of ambiguity among some organisations as to what constituted a “volunteer”. Even if they had kept accurate records of volunteer numbers, then, this may have left out groups who they did not consider to be volunteers. School groups working towards their John Muir Award, for example, were one group over whom there existed some confusion in this respect. For clarity, I asked organisations to include all such people and groups in their estimations. From speaking to other National Park Volunteer Co-ordinators at the meeting described in Section 2.3, I gathered that for the purposes of securing funding, it is best to include as many people as may possibly be considered a volunteer. They are, after all, all contributing in some way towards the aim of the national park.
- **Minimum level of involvement?:** Another uncertainty was the level of involvement a person needs to have in order to be counted as a “volunteer”. Butterfly Conservation and BTO, for example, asked rhetorically: if someone carries out one survey, or logs one observation online, do they then count as a volunteer? Again, for the purposes of this survey, I asked them to include everyone.
- **Duplication:** In terms of *overall* numbers of volunteers within the National Park, it is probable that some people volunteer for more than one organisation, and will therefore account for more than one of the overall number of volunteers. A person might, for example, carry out a regular survey for BTO, whilst also volunteering two days per month at a local NNR or RSPB reserve. In some cases, I was told that the number of volunteer days would have to suffice for measuring the number of volunteers, even though this may have included several days by the same volunteer.

The volunteer numbers presented in Section 4.3, then, should be considered estimates. I am satisfied, however, that they are as accurate as they could be in the circumstances, and are sufficient to reliably reflect general trends. The aim in the findings is to create an overall “picture” of the current situation regarding environmental volunteering right across the National Park.

2.5. Volunteer Survey

The volunteer survey was carried out towards the end of this project, and there was insufficient time to give it the degree of attention that would produce accurate data. In attempting to identify participants, it proved more difficult to find people willing to be interviewed, as requests had to be channelled through a member of staff from the relevant organisation, and volunteers had to then contact the researcher directly, with no incentive other than good will. In total, there were seven respondents to the survey. Consequently, the findings detailed in Section 4.13 should be considered anecdotal, rather than necessarily highlighting any trends. There is certainly scope to expand this study in the future. Sample surveys are included in Appendix 3. The questions it asked were as follows:

- **Personal Details:** This was simply to establish the name, age (within rough categories) and gender of the volunteers, and which organisation they volunteered for.
- **What environmental volunteering do you take part in?:** This aimed to identify trends in the sort of activities that were commonly carried out.
- **What is your motivation for volunteering?:** This aimed to move away from objectives of organisations and the National Park, and instead focus on the experiences, motivations and opinions of the volunteers themselves. What interests them? What do they like about volunteering, and why did they decide to start?
- **What do you feel you get from taking part?:** This, I found, was very closely related to the previous question.
- **Are there any other types of volunteering opportunities you would like to take part in?:** This aimed to identify any gap in the provision of environmental volunteering opportunities, and provide CNPA with ideas as to what projects could be encouraged or set up in future that would particularly interest volunteers.

2.6. Community Survey

The community survey was identified at the start of this project as a potential means of answering questions such as “are there members of the community interested in environmental volunteering?”, and “what opportunities are there locally to become involved in environmental volunteering”? Initial points of contact were the various Community Development Officers (CDOs) within the National Park, who are employed by organisations such as Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS), Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust (TGDT) and Marr Area

Partnership. The intention was to then be put in touch with members of the community who would potentially be interested in environmental volunteering opportunities.

As with the Volunteer Survey, this aspect of the project perhaps suffered from a lack of available time to devote to it. In speaking to the CDOs, however, the general situation regarding the attitude to environmental volunteering quickly became apparent. The overwhelming themes were that there is a lack of opportunities for local people to become involved with environmental volunteering in their immediate area, and that people do not feel sufficiently empowered to set up and take control of these activities themselves. This section, then, became incorporated in the wider Organisation Survey, and is discussed further in the Findings – see, in particular, sections 4.12.5 and 4.12.6.

2.7. Analysis and recommendations

The final stage of the project consisted mostly of:

- Reviewing the data collected during the Organisation Survey and identifying emerging themes.
- As accurately as possible, determining the numbers of people involved in environmental volunteering within the National Park. These were then further analysed to give an idea of the total number of volunteers by local authority area, nearest population centre, and type of environmental volunteering activity undertaken.
- Meeting with senior member of CNPA staff to discuss the Findings and determine the Recommendations.

3. Literature Review

This section provides a summary of the key themes that emerged from a review of recent reports and articles relating to volunteering.

3.1. Summary of articles

The following documents were useful for this project. They are numbered them for easy reference:

- 1. The Green Gym (IVR/Voluntary Action, 2000):** This report is an exploration of the specific impacts of a then-recent initiative set up by TCV, where people with no prior experience of environmental volunteering were introduced to it as a means of improving their health and fitness. Available online: <http://www.ivr.org.uk/component/ivr/the-green-gym>
- 2. Volunteering in the natural outdoors in the UK and Ireland: A literature review (IVR, 2007):** Compiled by the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR), this is a useful overview of the findings of previous research into the impacts and benefit of environmental volunteering. Available online: <http://www.ivr.org.uk/component/ivr/volunteering-in-the-natural-outdoors-in-the-uk-and-ireland-a-literature-review>
- 3. Volunteering in the natural heritage; an audit and review of natural heritage volunteering in Scotland (SNH, 2007):** This project compiled a database of volunteer-taking organisations in the natural heritage (or “natural outdoors”) in Scotland, and examined ways of supporting and further developing it. Available online: http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/reportno219.pdf
- 4. The National Trust Working Holidays Programme: An Impact Evaluation (IVR, 2008):** Carried out by IVR, this report focuses specifically on National Trust working holidays in England, but its conclusions are useful for looking at the wider impacts of environmental volunteering. Available online: <http://www.ivr.org.uk/component/ivr/impact-evaluation-of-working-holidays-national-trust>
- 5. Scotland’s National Parks and National Nature Reserves: Overcoming barriers to engagement (CNPA/SNH, 2009):** A study carried out by CNPA in partnership with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), looking into ways in which certain segments of society can be better encouraged to visit and engage with national parks. Available online: <http://cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/about-us/publications/?publicationID=248>

6. **‘Making volunteering easier’. The story of environmental volunteering in South West England (IVR, 2009):** Despite its specific regional focus, this report provided suggestions for overcoming barriers to volunteering that can certainly be applied elsewhere.
Available online: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/volunteering-easier_tcm6-15339.pdf

7. **Volunteering and Health: evidence of impact and implications for policy and practice (IVR, 2011):** This report was conducted to inform the Department for Health’s strategy on recruiting volunteers in the health sector. It was particularly useful for its findings on the mental health benefits of volunteering in general.
Available online: <http://www.ivr.org.uk/images/stories/Institute%20of%20Volunteering%20Research/Migrated%20Resources/Volunteering%20and%20Health%20Literature%20Review%20October%20Final.pdf>

8. **Volunteer Management in European Parks: EU-Grundtvig Multilateral Project (Europarc Consulting, 2013):** With funding and support from the European Commission, this recent report, carried out by Europarc Consulting, looked at the impact of volunteering in protected areas across Europe. Most usefully, it looked at the motivations and demographics of the volunteers themselves.
Available online: <http://www.europarc.org/what-we-do/volunteer-management>

The following sections summarise the themes and key points that emerged from the reports listed above. The specific points are numbered according to which of the above documents they can be found in.

3.2. Origins and current situation

- The origins of volunteering can be found in nineteenth-century philanthropy, but developed in its modern, formalised sense through the launch of BTCV (now TCV) in 1959 (1).
- Increased awareness of environmental problems is cited not only as a result of volunteering in the natural outdoors, but also a cause of it. That is, a growing recognition of environmental problems has led to a growth in environmental volunteering (1).
- The Scottish and UK governments now recognise the benefits of outdoor experiences such as environmental volunteering (2).
- There are surprisingly high levels of volunteering in England and Wales, where 44% of people took part in formal volunteering at least once in the year 2006-7 (1).
- The same study found a lower figure in Scotland, but this “can be partly attributed to the way in which the question was asked in the Scottish Executive’s Household Survey” (1).
- Within volunteering as a whole, it is difficult to determine the number of people nationally involved in “volunteering in the outdoors” or “environmental volunteering”, as the survey placed them within the wider category of “the environment” (1).
- There are nonetheless thought to be fairly low numbers of participants in this sector compared to those volunteering within health or sport. This may not, however, reflect the whole situation, since organisations were categorised according to their “main purpose”.

There may be organisations such as the Scouts, who often engage in environmental volunteering, but whose main purpose is defined as “youth” (1).

3.3. Value and impact

The literature is unanimous in finding that environmental volunteering has positive effects on those who take part in it, as well as on the organisations providing opportunities for it. 98% of environmental volunteers across Europe saw their experience as being beneficial (8), and many in the UK felt that these benefits had exceeded their expectations (2). Benefits to both volunteers and volunteer-taking organisations can be summarised as follows:

- **Increased environmental awareness:** It has been found that carrying out surveys and monitoring work increases a person’s sense of responsibility towards the natural world (2), and that practical conservation tasks carried out during residential experiences often lead participants to take a greater interest in local conservation issues when they return home (4).
- **Skills and employability:** The National Trust study found that the greatest impacts of the organisation’s working holidays were the new skills they had learned when carrying out practical conservation tasks, as well as “soft skills” such as team work (4). Elsewhere, young people in particular felt they were more employable as a result of skills they had gained from environmental volunteering (2).
- **Mental health:** Nearly all of the studies emphasised the mental health benefits of volunteering. Especially in people who are retired, unemployed or experiencing mental health issues, volunteering was found to improve people’s self-perception through contributing to a “good cause” and the feeling of fulfilling a productive role (7).
- **Social Integration:** This is loosely connected to mental health benefits, as volunteering was found to combat depression associated with loneliness. It is therefore especially beneficial for socially isolated members of communities (7). Even taking into account the whole spectrum of environmental volunteers, 80% of respondents listed social contact as a major benefit (8).
- **Physical health:** 77% of respondents to the Europarc survey listed improved fitness and well-being as a benefit of their involvement in environmental volunteering (8). BTCV’s Green Gym was also found to fulfil its purpose of a means of improving the fitness of its participants (1).
- **Engagement of supporters:** This was found to be a benefit felt by volunteer-taking organisations. The National Trust, for example, relies on the support of its members, and saw involvement in volunteering as a key way of increasing members’ interest in its activities (4).
- **Positive environmental impact:** As well as all the benefits felt by the volunteers and the organisations recruiting them, projects carried out by those involved in environmental volunteering was found to have a “material effect” on the condition of the natural outdoors (2).
- **Essential for survival:** Many organisations are completely reliant on volunteers, even in their day-to-day running, so the simple benefit is that they would not survive without them (2).

3.4. Demographics and motivations

- In the Europarc survey, 60% of respondents were aged sixty and above. This figure was even higher in the UK, at around 67% (8).
- 70% of these, however, stated that they had *started* volunteering when they were under sixty, although only 8% had started when they were under twenty (8).
- 45% of volunteers were found to live in or near National Parks across Europe. This figure was higher in England, at around 60% (8).
- There is a very low prevalence of people from ethnic minority backgrounds involved in environmental volunteering in the UK (2).
- Not a great deal has been written about volunteers' individual motivations, but one article found that volunteers are becoming more demanding, always wanting to "get something out of" their volunteering (2). Similarly, the report on TCV's Green Gym stated that participants were rarely doing it for purely altruistic reasons (1).
- TCV's Green Gym was found to have created a "new breed of volunteer" – people who initially became involved in environmental volunteering for health reasons, but remained involved due to the pleasure they derived from improving their environment (1).

3.5. Barriers and recommendations

The following recommendations, made in the various reports and articles detailed in this section, and seemed relevant to this project and therefore worth exploring:

- Being clearer on the relevance of involvement in the natural outdoors to groups whose involvement is limited (5), and providing greater opportunities for such people to become involved (8). Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds should be a strong focus in this respect (2).
- A service, or member of staff, in each or both of Scotland's National Parks, to act as a point of access and information for anyone wishing to engage in outdoor/environmental activities there (5).
- Reducing bureaucracy: Common barriers preventing certain groups from becoming involved in outdoor activities within Scotland's National parks included the perceived difficulty of risk management (5/8), and high levels of bureaucracy on the part of schools and other institutions (5). Working to reduce the negative effects of these would have a very positive impact on the number of people using the Parks for educational purposes.
- Offering a wider variety of voluntary opportunities (8).
- Volunteer-taking organisations often struggle with recruitment of sufficient numbers of volunteers. Common reasons for this were found to be a lack of understanding of what environmental volunteering involved, and the false belief that it required a relatively high minimum time commitment (6).

4. Findings

4.1. Organisations offering environmental volunteering opportunities

Overall, the survey of organisations revealed just over **two thousand people** involved in environmental volunteering across around **twenty-five organisations**. This section details the organisations offering environmental volunteering opportunities within the Cairngorms National Park, as well as those who currently do not, but may be willing to work in partnership with CNPA in the future. Having travelled the length and breadth of the Park interviewing members of many organisations, as well as following up on any other contacts that were passed on to me, I am confident that the list below can be considered almost exhaustive. I have split the volunteer-taking organisations into three groups:

- **Active:** Those who already have voluntary opportunities firmly in place.
- **Semi-active:** Those who have only limited opportunities, but are supportive of the idea of volunteering and would accept more volunteers if opportunities arose.
- **Possible future partnerships:** organisations currently not offering environmental volunteering opportunities, but who may be worth contacting in future as CNPA seeks to expand its volunteering activities.

These opportunities are presented as a table on the following page. The table would be of use as a starting point for someone working for CNPA in a “signposting” role. That is, if a member of the public contacted CNPA asking about environmental volunteering opportunities within the Park, the list could be used as an easy reference guide in order to direct them to the organisation most suited to their interests. Brief descriptions of the work of these organisations are included in Appendix 1.

Active	Semi-active	Possible future partnerships
Balmoral RS	Angus Glen RS	Anagach Woods Trust
British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)	Boat of Garten Wildlife Group	Atholl Estate RS
Butterfly Conservation	Cairngorm Mountain RS	BEES
COAT Adopt a Path	Highland Aspen Group	Buglife
Crown Estate RS	Muir of Dinnet NNR	Crathie Community Council
Explore Abernethy RS	New Caledonian Woodlands	Dee Fisheries Trust
Glen Tanar RS	RSPB Crannach	Edinburgh Young Carers
Health Walks		ENABLE
Highland Council RS		The Green Team
Highland Wildlife Park		Tomintoul and Glenlivet DT
Junior Rangers		Trees for Life
Kingussie CDC		VABS
Laggan Forest Trust		Wilderness Scotland
Newtonmore Wildcat Trust		
NTS Mar Lodge RS		
Rothiemurchus RS		
RSPB Abernethy		
RSPB Insh Marshes		
RSPB Loch Garten		
Scottish Mink Initiative		

Figure 3: Table categorising volunteer-taking opportunities as active, semi-active, and possible future partnerships.

4.2. Types of volunteer involvement

For the purposes of directing potential volunteers to suitable opportunities, it is also useful to categorise the organisations listed in Figure 3 into potential types of volunteer involvement. This categorisation of voluntary opportunities is presented as a chart on the following page. The opportunities are split into the following three categories:

- **Groups:** These organisations would be suitable for a volunteer group – for example, a DofE, Scouts or John Muir Trust regional group – to carry out voluntary tasks. This may be on a one-off or regular basis. The group may require a large-scale task to be set aside for them, such as clearing an area of invasive species, or maintaining a section of a footpath.
- **Individuals:** This refers to an ongoing group or project with which an individual can become involved. There may, for example, be a local conservation group who meet one day per week to carry out a voluntary task, and welcome any new members. There are a number of organisations – notably several ranger services – that lie within both the “individual” and “group” categories. These organisations were found to be established and

ongoing enough to accommodate individuals on an “as and when” basis, yet also had enough large tasks to enable one-off large groups to volunteer with them.

- **Specific skills:** These are organisations whose primary voluntary opportunities enable volunteers to make use of particular skills or knowledge they may have. This may include practical skills such as the use of chainsaws, or the ability to identify species for wildlife surveys.

Groups	Individual	Specific Skills
Angus Glen RS	Boat of Garten Wildlife Group	British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)
Balmoral RS	COAT Adopt a Path	Butterfly Conservation
Crown Estate RS	Explore Abernethy RS	Highland Aspen Group
Glen Tanar RS	Health Walks	
Highland Council RS	Highland Council RS	
NTS Mar Lodge RS*	Highland Wildlife Park	
Rothiemurchus RS	Junior Rangers	
RSPB Abernethy*	Kingussie CDC	
RSPB Crannach	Laggan Forest Trust	
	Muir of Dinnet NNR	
	Newtonmore Wildcat Trust	
	RSPB Abernethy*	
	RSPB Abernethy (Friends of Abernethy Group)	
	RSPB Crannach	
	RSPB Insh Marshes*	
	RSPB Loch Garten*	
	Scottish Mink Initiative	

Figure 4: Chart showing volunteer-taking organisations by type of possible volunteer involvement. *Denotes where accommodation is provided.

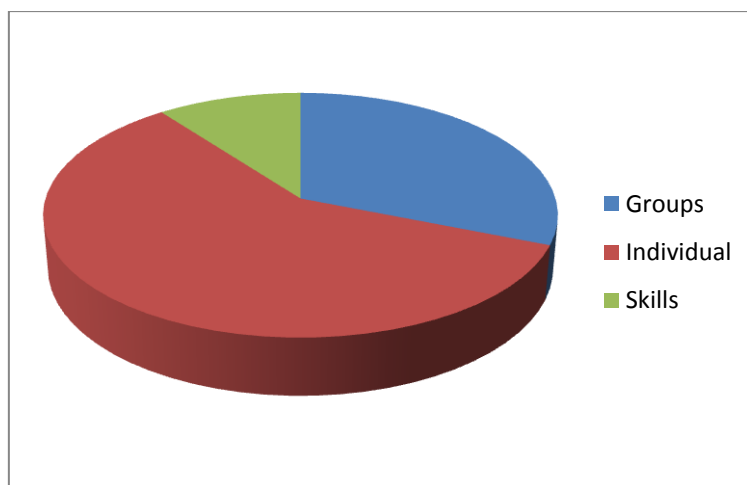


Figure 5: Pie chart showing proportion of volunteer-taking organisations by type of possible volunteer involvement.

Interpretation:

- There is a clear prevalence of organisations suited to individual involvement.
- There is, however, a lack of organisations that exist purely for the purposes of volunteering. At the meeting of Volunteer Coordinators I learned that most other National parks have at least one “volunteer group” that meet regularly to carry out voluntary tasks on a given site. Here, this is limited to the Friends of Abernethy group (who volunteer exclusively at RSPB Abernethy) and Boat of Garten Wildlife Group. Otherwise, opportunities for individuals are with established organisations such as ranger services who take on individual volunteers only when they are directly contacted, and wider projects such as COAT’s Adopt a Path scheme and Scottish Mink Initiative.
- Organisations suitable for group involvement are mostly ranger services who can set aside large-scale tasks for volunteer groups.
- The table shows a lack of voluntary opportunities requiring specific skills. In the case of BTO and Butterfly Conservation, these are surveys and transects that require skills of species identification. Highland Aspen Group, meanwhile, mostly require volunteers to carry out skilled tasks such as “grafting”. It should be borne in mind, however, that these are the types of involvement that organisations are *primarily* suited to. There may be *some* opportunities for wildlife recording at other organisations, for example, or one-off opportunities for people with specific practical skills. If CNPA were to take a more direct role in Coordinating volunteering within the National Park, organisations would need to notify us of any such specific opportunities.

4.3. (Approximate) Current Volunteer numbers

Following on from the overview of volunteer-taking organisations, it seems appropriate to give an idea as to the number of volunteers the report is referring to. As mentioned, the total number of volunteers is around two thousand, but the following section will aim to give an idea of the spread of these volunteers across organisations and geographical areas, as well as across types of activity. It also distinguishes between volunteers who are local residents, and those who are visiting the Park purely for the purposes of volunteering.

It is itself of note that gathering accurate numbers of volunteers has been almost impossible. Whereas all other UK National Parks appear to have a strict system where volunteer-taking organisations have to regularly log the number of volunteers they take on, and the number of hours they provide, here there is no such system. As mentioned, the closest equivalent is the data on “ranger-led volunteer days” shown in Figure 1. I found, however, that this could not be seen as a reliable source of information, and in any case, was restricted to the ranger services.

In some cases, the numbers in Figure 1 *were* accurate. This was the case in small organisations such as RSPB Cranach, SNH Muir of Dinnet, and BOGWIG, where volunteer numbers were so small that

they could be counted from memory by the interviewee. In rare cases, too, larger organisations could reliably work out the number of volunteers they received. At RSPB Loch Garten, for example, the site manager knew the number of weeks per year where volunteers were taken, how many places were available, and that volunteer weeks were always fully subscribed, He could therefore work out the exact number. On the whole, however, the volunteer figures should be considered estimates. I am satisfied, however, that they are as accurate as they could be in the circumstances, and are sufficient to reliably reflect *general trends*.

As a starting point, Figure 3 below shows the total numbers of volunteers taken on by each organisation, in descending order. The figures are based on (mostly face-to-face) conversations with representatives of each organisation. The figures are annual.

Organisation	Annual volunteers
Rothiemurchus RS	525
NTS Mar Lodge RS	500
RSPB Abernethy	425
RSPB Loch Garten	92
British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)	80
Glen Tanar RS	62
Balmoral RS	51
Health Walks	40
RSPB Insh Marshes	35
Explore Abernethy RS	35
Crown Estate RS	32
Butterfly Conservation	30
COAT Adopt a Path	23
Scottish Mink Initiative	20
Highland Council	20
Laggan Forest Trust	17
Kingussie CDC	15
Caledonian Woodlands	13
Newtonmore Wildcat	12
Boat of Garten WG	8
RSPB Crannach	6
Muir of Dinnet NNR	5
Highland Aspen Group	5
Wildlife Park	3
Estimated total	2054

Figure 6: Annual number of volunteers per organisation. Ranger services are denoted by “RS”.

Figure 7 displays the above figures in bar chart form, clearly showing the largest volunteer-taking organisations.

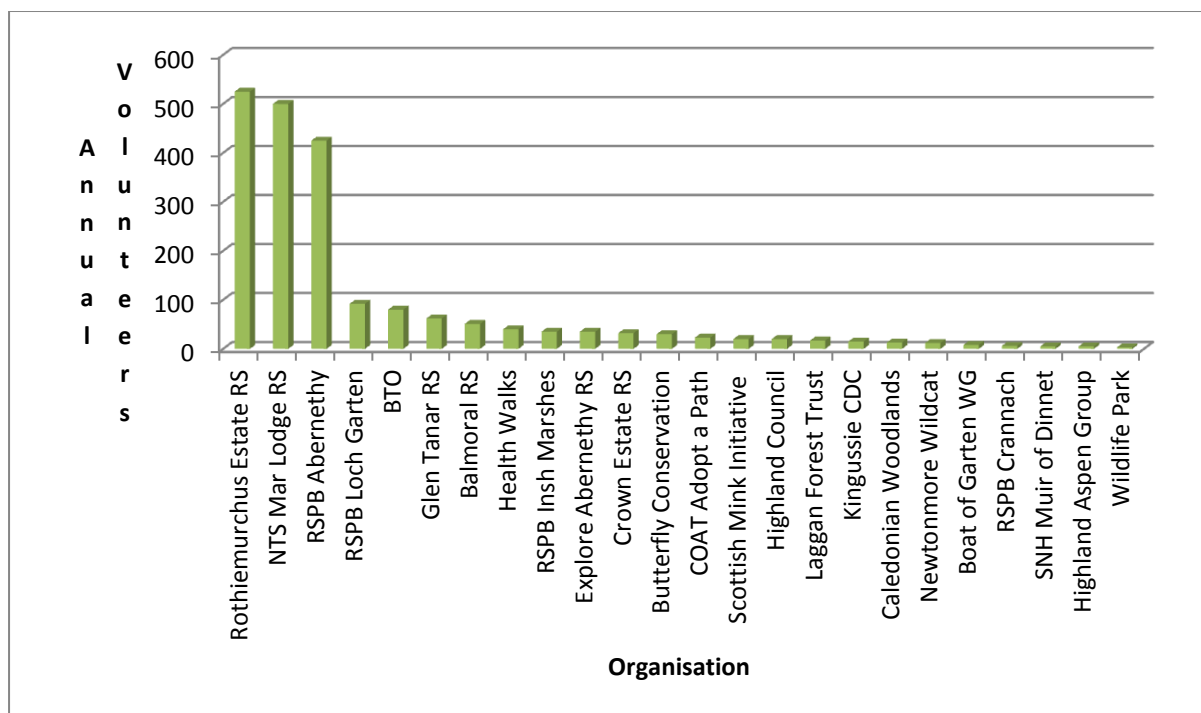


Figure 7: bar chart showing number of volunteers taken on by each organisation.

Interpretation

- The charts show that there are clearly three organisations taking on almost the majority of volunteers within the National park: RSPB Abernethy NTS Mar Lodge, and Rothiemurchus Estate. For all of these, there was no clear system in place for counting volunteer numbers, so the figures are estimates by staff at the three organisations. It was, however, clear that each of them takes on a huge number and variety of volunteers.
- The numbers, however, do not tell the whole story in terms of effectiveness in working towards the aims of the CNPA, and engaging people in the aims of their respective organisations. Organisations right at the bottom of the scale, such as SNH Muir of Dinnet and RSPB Crannach, are small but well-managed, effective teams of local volunteers. Many of the others, meanwhile, demonstrated great potential for more volunteering opportunities with slightly better coordination of this aspect of their activities, or input from CNPA.

4.4. Geographical distribution of volunteers

This section aims to highlight the geographical areas of the Park where environmental volunteering opportunities are particularly prevalent or lacking.

4.4.1. Volunteers by local authority area

In gaining an overview of the geographical distribution of voluntary opportunities across the National Park, a good place to start is to categorise volunteers according to the local authority area they are operating within. There are five local authority areas within the national park - Angus, Aberdeenshire, Highland, Moray, and Perth and Kinross. Figures 8 and 9 compare the total annual number of volunteers in each of these. With two organisations – Butterfly Conservation and Scottish Mink Initiative, no data was available on which local authority area their volunteers operate within. These volunteers are therefore recorded under “multiple”.

Local authority	Annual volunteers
Aberdeenshire	659
Angus	0
Highland	1307
Moray	37
Perth and Kinross	1
Multiple	50
Estimated total	2054

Figure 8: Chart showing the total annual number of volunteers per local authority area.

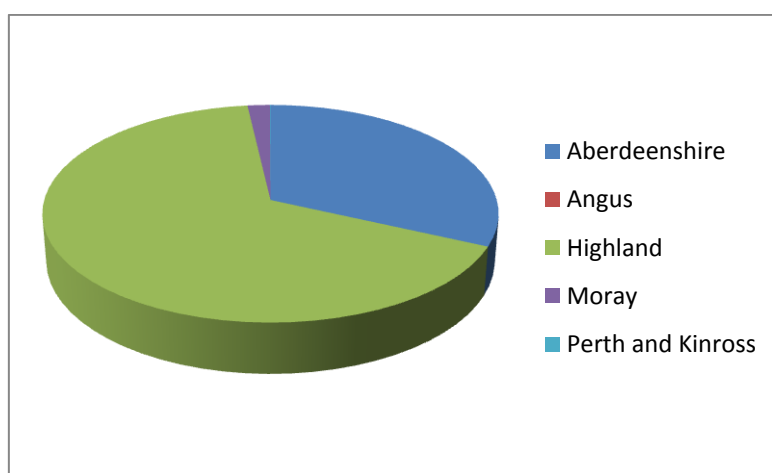


Figure 9: Pie chart showing the total annual number of volunteers per local authority area.

Interpretation

- On the whole, the data show a huge disparity between the numbers of volunteers in each local authority area, with the vast majority operating in the Highland and Aberdeenshire areas.
- A major caveat of this data, however, is that each local authority area does not occupy an equal-sized part of the National Park. Indeed, by far the largest areas are Aberdeenshire and Highland. These are also the areas that contain all of the largest volunteer-taking organisations. NTS Mar Lodge, for example, is in Aberdeenshire, whilst RSPB Abernethy, RSPB Loch Garten, and Rothiemurchus ranger service, are all in the Highland area. The next section therefore rearranges these volunteer numbers by their nearest population centre.
- The only volunteers in the Moray area are those at Crown Estate (whose ranger base is in Tomintoul, which is in the small corner of Moray council area that lies within the Park) and a few BTO volunteers.
- There is a slight doubt as to whether there are really no volunteers in the Angus area of the Park. It is possible, however, since only a very small part of the National Park lies within that local authority area. The rangers interviewed at the Glen Doll Ranger Base were not aware of any current volunteers operating within their area. I did obtain data from BTO on their volunteer numbers in every postcode area within the National Park. This showed that the postcode DD8, which includes the Angus Glens, has thirty volunteers within it. The postcode, however, also includes the towns of Kirriemuir and Forfar, and sites such as RSPB's Loch Kinord reserve, and Forfar Loch Country Park. Only a few of these volunteers, then, are likely to be operating within the National Park.
- It seems likely that in reality there is more than one volunteer in the Perth and Kinross area. Certainly, however, the lack of knowledge among CNPA staff of volunteer-taking organisations there is itself indicative of its lack of connection with the National Park – at least in terms of environmental volunteering. It may also be of note that I was unable to contact NTS Killiecrankie Ranger Service.

4.4.2. Volunteers by nearest population centre

Categorising volunteer numbers by nearest population centre is perhaps a more accurate way of arranging the data than doing so by local authority area. Indeed, the figures do show a more even distribution of volunteers across the Park. The charts below show the number of volunteers operating closest to each of the major villages within the Park. Again, Butterfly Conservation and Scottish Mink Initiative are included in the “multiple” category. Health Walks are also included in this category here, since data was available on the local authority area they operated within, but not in villages within those areas.

Village	Annual volunteers
Kingussie	21
Kincraig	44
Newtonmore	18
Carrbridge	1
Aviemore	548
Grantown	29
Boat of Garten	105
Nethybridge	471
Ballater	104
Braemar	559
Laggan	25
Tomintoul	37
Blair Atholl	2
Dalwhinnie	1
Multiple	90

Figure 10: Chart showing the total annual number of volunteers according to their nearest population centre.

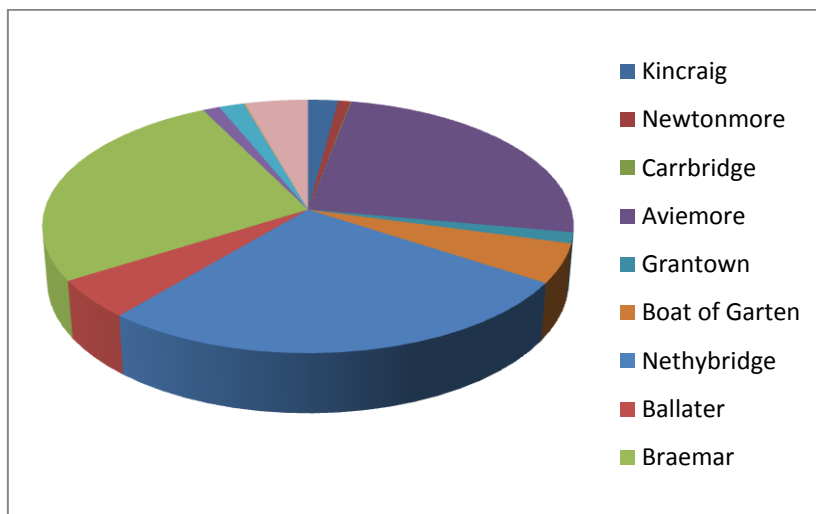


Figure 11: Pie chart showing the total annual number of volunteers according to their nearest population centre.

Interpretation

- The population centres with the most volunteers operating nearby are Nethybridge, Aviemore and Braemar. This is largely due to the three largest providers of volunteering opportunities – Mar Lodge, Rothiemurchus and RSPB Abernethy - being located in those

areas. In the following section, the numbers are presented as active *organisations* rather than volunteer numbers, which potentially reveals a more even distribution.

- Population centres with little or no environmental volunteering opportunities nearby are Carrbridge, Grantown, Newtonmore and Blair Atholl. In Carrbridge, the only volunteer I have become aware of is one carrying out a survey for BTO. In Grantown, as mentioned, I was unable to contact Anagach Woods Trust, which may have altered the results a little. Otherwise, there are some volunteers for BTO, and the weekend organised this year by New Caledonian Woodlands (in Anagach Woods) is included in the data. It is possible this is just a “one off”. In Newtonmore, the Wildcat Centre and Trust seemed to be the only environmental volunteering opportunity, and I am not aware of any in Blair Atholl.

4.4.3. Organisations by nearest population centre

The data for volunteer numbers by nearest population centre was strongly influenced by large organisations taking on several hundred volunteers, such as RSPB Abernethy and NTS Mar Lodge. Looking purely at the number of *organisations* close to each population centre, regardless of how many volunteers they take on, reveals – potentially - a slightly more even distribution of environmental volunteering opportunities. Again, the category of “multiple” is included. This consists of Butterfly Conservation, Scottish Mink Initiative, BTO, Adopt a Path, Health Walks, Highland Council, and New Caledonian Woodlands, none of which operate from a central base in or near any of the villages. The data are presented in the charts below:

Village	No. of organisations
Kingussie	1
Kincraig	3
Newtonmore	1
Carrbridge	0
Aviemore	1
Grantown	1
Boat of Garten	2
Nethybridge	2
Ballater	4
Braemar	2
Laggan	1
Dalwhinnie	0
Blair Atholl	0
Tomintoul	1
Multiple	6

Figure 12: Chart showing number of volunteer-taking organisations by nearest population centre.

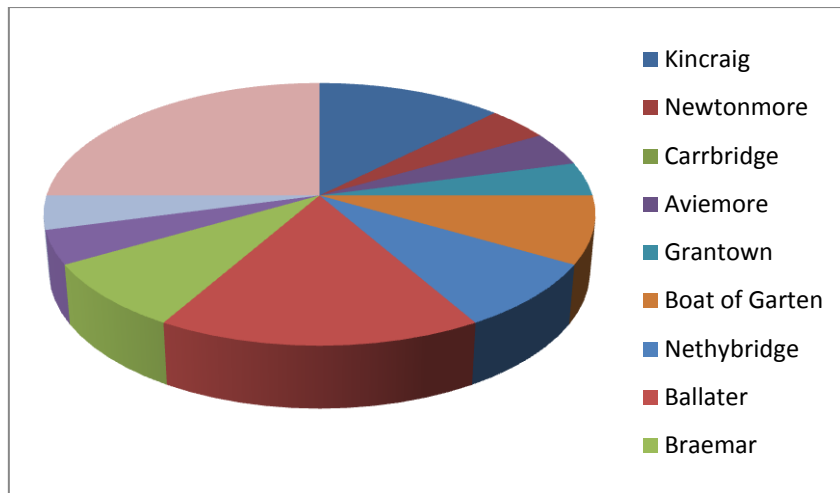


Figure 13: Pie chart showing number of volunteer-taking organisations by nearest population centre.

Interpretation

- The Pie chart shows a slightly more even distribution of environmental volunteering opportunities across the National Park – at least redressing the imbalance created by the large organisations close to Nethybridge, Braemar and Aviemore.
- The largest category is “multiple” - organisations with volunteers operating in various locations across the National Park (shaded in pink).
- In terms of volunteer-taking organisations, Kincaig emerges as one of the major population centres. This is due to its proximity to the Wildlife Park, Highland Aspen Group (based at the wildlife park but very much a separate organisation), and RSPB Insh Marshes, all of which take on relatively low numbers of volunteers compared to many of the other organisations.
- Ballater also emerges as a major population centre, and also due to multiple organisations taking on relatively few volunteers. These are Glen Tanar ranger service, RSPB Crannach and SNH Muir of Dinnet.
- As revealed in the previous section, Carrbridge, Granttown and Blair Atholl emerge as population centres with few, if any, environmental opportunities nearby.
- It should be borne in mind that the figures take into account only the *site* where volunteering activities take place. At times, volunteers may come from elsewhere within the National park – for example, the many students from Granttown Grammar School volunteering at RSPB Abernethy.
- When the figures are looked at in combination with those in the previous section, however, there is in many cases a correlation between the number of volunteers, and number of volunteer-taking organisations, close to population centres. In Carrbridge, for example, the survey found only one volunteer, and there are no volunteer-taking organisations.

4.5. Types of environmental volunteering activity

In speaking to the organisations listed in Section 4.1 and establishing the types of voluntary activities that take place, it became apparent that these could be categorised into four main areas. These are outlined below.

Practical conservation tasks

- Typical activities in this category include path maintenance, cutting back and/or removing non-native species, tree planting, construction and removal of deer fences, and building or fixing fences and/or bridges. Often these are tasks that suit large groups of volunteers –for example, clearing a large area of invasive species, or planting a large number of trees.
- Practical conservation tasks are even at times carried out by organisations such as Butterfly Conservation, whose primary purpose is recording numbers of a particular species. Members occasionally carry out tasks that aim to improve the habitat of that species.
- Groups working towards their DoFE (volunteering section) and John Muir Award are also included in this category.
- Simple maintenance tasks such as litter picking are also fairly common in this category. At Rothiemurchus, for example, a number of Scout groups come and remove litter from their regular campsite on the Estate. Clearing up regular campsites was also a common activity for DoFE groups at Glen Tanar and Balmoral.

These activities work towards the following CNAP aims:

- 4.5: Help communities find ways to engage with, realise the benefit they get from, and have a say in the management of, local natural heritage assets.
- 4.6: Provide a wide range of opportunities for people to contribute to the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity of the Park.

Surveys/wildlife recording

- Activities like this are often referred to as “Citizen Science”.
- They often consist of carrying out a regular survey of particular types of flora and fauna in an area. Often these are recorded online. Their primary purpose is to verify records, and contribute to the stock of knowledge on a species – for example, giving an idea of migration and hibernation patterns.
- Carrying out a survey usually requires regular, long-term commitment from the volunteer, if not particularly frequent.
- Sometimes monitoring and wildlife recording can be less of a “formal” commitment. The Crown Estate, for example, has a website where people can log any wildlife sighting, even if they only do this only once.

- There has been some mention of volunteers becoming involved in archaeological investigation and recording – for example, the “Scotland’s rural past” project taking place on the Balmoral Estate, and some archaeological activity at Mar Lodge.

The following CNAP aims are addressed by such activities:

- 4.2(b): Improve public understanding and perception of estates and of what estate management can deliver in terms of biodiversity.
- 4.6(b): Highlight and encourage volunteer participation in biological recording schemes.

Visitor Engagement

- This refers to any activity where the primary purpose is the imparting of information or services to visitors, in a voluntary capacity.
- In several cases it involves staffing a visitor centre – for example, at Explore Abernethy, Newtonmore Wildcat Trust, and RSPB Loch Garten.
- A number of the organisations interviewed involve volunteers in the running of one-off, or regular, events. These include the series of “mini festivals” in Kingussie, “family fun days” at RSPB Abernethy, and various “open days” at Laggan Forest Trust.
- Leading guided walks is included in this category. This includes Health Walks, and occasional guided walks to the badger hide in Boat of Garten with BOGWIG. Some ranger services cited this as a potential future opportunity for environmental volunteering.

This contributes to the following CNAP aim:

- 4.1: Create, support and celebrate a network of ambassadors

Other

From the organisations I have interviewed, the following miscellaneous voluntary activities have been identified. These, I believe, can still be classified as “environmental volunteering”, since they are taking place within an organisation whose primary purpose is nature conservation or the engagement of people in parts of the National Park:

- COAT’s Adopt a Path project
- Being a voluntary board member – for example, at Laggan Forest Trust, or Kingussie CDC.
- Placement students sometimes become involved with administrative and management tasks, as well as practical conservation work.
- Indoor and admin work such as data input and book-keeping, which volunteers assist with at RSPB Insh Marshes and Crannach, as well as SNH Muir of Dinnet.

4.5.1. Volunteer numbers by type of activity

Figure 14 splits the organisations into types of activity. The categories consist of organisations for whom I detected the types of activity were a *major focus* – that is, they devote a significant number of volunteer hours to it. As such, it is possible for an organisation to fall into more than one category. At Explore Abernethy, for example, volunteers are involved in many practical conservation tasks, but visitor engagement activities such as staffing the visitor centre and helping at events also make up a significant portion of their volunteer input.

Type of activity	No of organisations
Practical conservation	17
Monitoring/recording	8
Visitor engagement	7
Other	3

Figure 14: Chart showing number of organisations focused on each type of environmental volunteering activity.

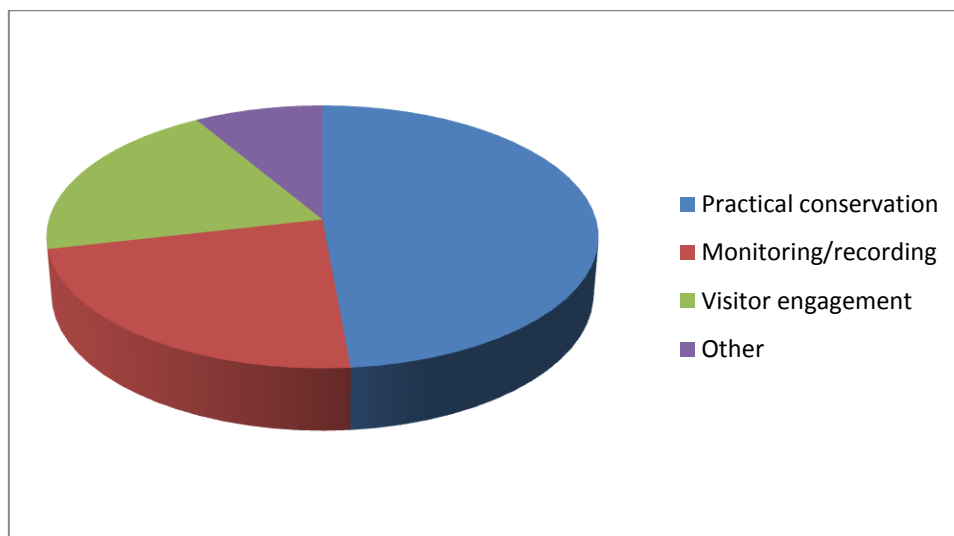


Figure 15: Pie chart showing proportion of organisations focused on each type of environmental volunteering activity.

4.6. Demographics of volunteers

This section presents data on the age of people involved in environmental volunteering, as well as whether they come from within or outwith the National Park.

4.6.1. Age

In speaking to the various volunteer-taking organisations, it was not possible to gain any accurate numerical data on the age of volunteers. This would require a more thorough volunteer survey involving at least several hundred volunteers. Anecdotally, however, the following became apparent:

- Among people involved in environmental volunteering, the largest age group is retirement age – around sixty and above. This reflects the findings of the Europarc report discussed in Section 3.1.
- Another significant proportion of volunteers are those in the 16-25 age category who are interested in pursuing a career in conservation or ranger work. This volunteering can either take place pre or post-University, or sometimes during college or University holidays.
- VABS identified the 25 to 65 age category as a major gap in involvement in environmental volunteering activities. Their opinion was that there are many people in that age category within the National Park who are either unemployed or looking for “something different” to do, and would therefore be very interested if they were made aware of any environmental volunteering opportunities.

4.6.2. Local or non-local?

When examining the demographic of people involved in environmental volunteering, a distinction should be made between people living within the National Park, and people who come from elsewhere and stay temporarily within the Park. The extent to which the National park fulfils its aims by involving each of these types of volunteer can be imagined as two ends of a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, the National Park is a place for nature enthusiasts from all over the UK to come and experience. At the other, it is successfully engaging with the communities lying within its boundaries. Of course, it could be both of these at once, but this section aims to approximately position the Cairngorms National Park on that spectrum.

The following organisations take on volunteers who live within the National Park:

- Balmoral Ranger Service
- Boat of Garten Wildlife Group
- BTO
- Butterfly Conservation
- COAT Adopt a Path
- Crown Estate Ranger Service
- Explore Abernethy
- Glen Tanar Ranger Service
- Health Walks

- Highland Aspen Group
- Highland Council Ranger Service
- Highland Wildlife Park
- Kingussie CDC
- Laggan Forest Trust
- Newtonmore Wildcat Centre
- Rothiemurchus Estate
- RSPB Abernethy
- RSPB Crannach
- RSPB Insh Marshes
- Scottish Mink Initiative
- SNH Muir of Dinnet

These, however, tend to be fairly low in numbers, and nearly always organised on a very ad-hoc basis – that is, potential volunteers simply contacting the organisation and asking how they could become involved. Except in a few cases (such as RSPB Abernethy), organisations have not taken the initiative to set up a local group of volunteers. The following charts give the approximate number and proportion of local and non-local volunteers within the National Park as a whole:

Local	Outside NP
766	1288

Figure 16: Chart showing approximate numbers of local and non-local people involved in environmental volunteering within the National Park.

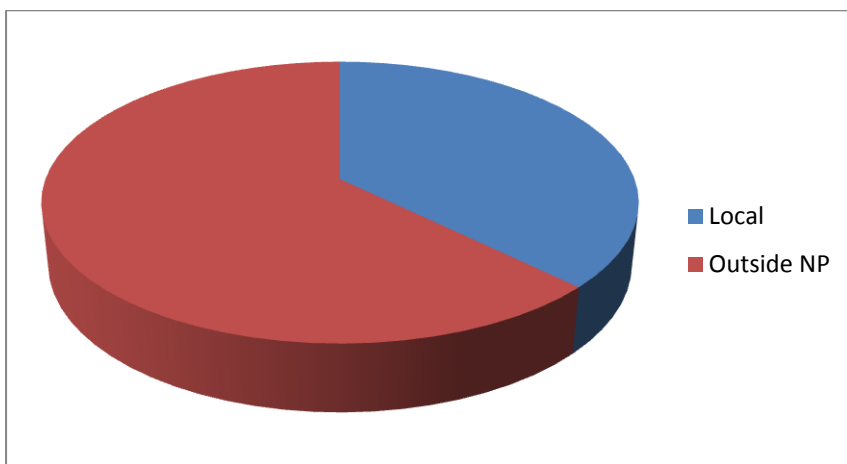


Figure 17: Pie chart showing proportions of local and non-local people involved in environmental volunteering within the National Park.

Interpretation

- Overall, there is a high prevalence of volunteers from outside the National Park. This is mostly due to the largest volunteer-taking organisations, for which most volunteers come from outside the National park and stay temporarily on site. This is the case at Mar Lodge, whose volunteer base mostly consists of groups staying on site for a week at a time.
- There are some grey areas as to when volunteers count as “local” and “non-local”, as sometimes volunteers come from the nearest urban centre. Organisations on Deeside such as Glen Tanar and Balmoral Ranger Services receive numerous voluntary groups from Aberdeen. Although Aberdeen is not within the National Park, its proximity means that volunteering can in this case be seen as a way of attracting people into the Park on a regular basis. These people are in a markedly different situation to, say, a volunteer from the South of England who is centrally recruited by RSPB.

4.7. Locations of activities

- It was found that voluntary activities take place predominantly outside, as may be expected given that practical conservation tasks are the primary focus of the highest number of organisations.
- There are, however, also volunteers operating in a number of indoor roles, mostly in the “visitor engagement” and “other” categories. These include volunteers staffing visitor centres (Explore Abernethy, Newtonmore Wildcat Centre), and several cases of people working on admin tasks such as book-keeping and data input. These serve as a reminder that involving people in organisations focused on conservation ought not necessarily require people to “get their hands dirty”.
- In most cases, outdoor voluntary activities take place within a fairly short walk of the visitor centre or ranger base, although a few sites (such as RSPB Cranach) require a longer walk to access the areas where these activities are based.

4.8. Frequency and duration of volunteer commitment

- Overall, there was found to be a wide range in the frequency and duration of volunteer commitment, ranging from local residents volunteering occasionally, to people from outside the National Park volunteering for a one-off, “full-time” week.
- Local volunteers’ involvement tended to be one day per week at most, with one or two days per month also being a common level of involvement.
- Some of those local volunteers’ weekly involvement would only be for a few hours at a time – for example, carrying out a weekly butterfly transect.
- For non-local volunteers, a one-week stay at Mar Lodge or one of the RSPB sites was by far the most common length of commitment.
- Groups from outside the National park volunteering for a weekend was also an occasional occurrence – for example, New Caledonian Woodlands spending a weekend in Anagach Woods. This is a format of involvement that several organisations from outwith the National Park have expressed an interest in setting up in future (see “possible future partnerships”).

4.9. Motivation for volunteer recruitment

The following emerged as common motivations among volunteer-taking organisations for taking on volunteers:

- Advocacy: A way to engage people with the work and purposes of the organisation.
- Quickly completing a large, simple task that would take several days for one or two rangers to complete. This includes re-surfacing a section of footpath, or removing an invasive species from a large area.
- Some small organisations rely completely on volunteers not only to “draw people in” to their activities, but to operate at all. This includes Newtonmore Wildcat Centre, Laggan Forest Trust and COAT Adopt a Path.
- Giving people opportunities: this was a particular emphasis among rangers and RSPB site managers, most of whom began their own careers as volunteers. For a young person to spend a period of time volunteering appears to be recognised as a key step towards a career of this nature, and there seemed to be a sense of duty to provide young people with opportunities for this.
- Several rangers and site managers cited days spent with volunteers as a fun part of their job. They recognised that involving volunteers could transform the general atmosphere of their workplace, making it more interesting and sociable. This was the case both for organisations taking on occasional local volunteers, and for those organisations with a “constant turnover of personalities” such as the RSPB reserves.

4.10. Partnerships between organisations

Overall, it seemed that there was not a great deal of cooperation between different volunteer-taking organisations within the National Park, although this is, admittedly, difficult to quantify. There were a few partnerships with larger organisations in the form of funding and the provision of volunteers from outside the National park, but there were no official “partnerships” between organisations of a similar size, only occasional informal connections. The following organisations were mentioned several times as external organisations working in partnership with those in the National Park, especially with regard to volunteering:

- Duke of Edinburgh’s Award: Many young people from both within and outside of the National Park volunteer as part of their Award, at sites such as RSPB Abernethy, Glen Tanar and Balmoral.
- John Muir Trust – this is both through its John Muir Award, which many young people gain through environmental volunteering, and its North East Conservation Volunteers group, who volunteer regularly at Mar Lodge and Glen Tanar.
- Scouts: Provide voluntary groups most notably to Balmoral and Rothiemurchus.
- Volunteer Highland (a local branch of Volunteer Scotland) – have facilitated voluntary groups at RSPB Abernethy.
- Various schools in the areas close to sites where volunteers are active.

The following informal connections between organisations *within* the National Park were notable:

- RSPB Insh Marshes actively works with several organisations. This includes sometimes combining its conservation aims with those of Butterfly Conservation and the Highland Wildlife Park, as well as sending volunteers to Highland Aspen Group as part of their week-long stay at the site.
- COAT works closely with Health Walks, as well as with community organisations such as Kingussie CDC.
- Explore Abernethy works with various organisations in the running of events (usually talks on species identification or on a particular conservation issue), including Butterfly Conservation, and Glenlivet and Highland Council ranger services (in organising joint events).

4.11. Partnerships between organisations and CNPA

The following volunteer-taking organisations are partners in the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan:

- Angus Council (including their ranger service in the Angus Glens)
- Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT – including “Adopt a Path” scheme)
- Highland Council (including their ranger service)
- NTS (one site - Mar Lodge)
- RSPB (four sites – Abernethy, Crannach, Insh Marshes, Loch Garten).
- SNH (one site – Muir of Dinnet NNR)

CNPA has funded the following organisations, though not for anything specifically relating to volunteering:

- Angus Glens Ranger Service
- Balmoral Ranger Service
- BOGWIG – previously, for a habitat survey, a small festival as part of “Wildlife Week”, and for a short time, a local ranger based only in an around Boat of Garten.
- Butterfly Conservation – for a leaflet on butterflies within the National Park.
- Crown Estate Ranger Service
- Explore Abernethy Ranger Service
- Glen Tanar Ranger Service
- Health Walks
- Highland Aspen Group – this is through Cairngorms Biodiversity Partnership, which also includes organisations such as SNH and Forestry Commission.
- Highland Council Ranger Service
- Newtonmore Wildcat Trust – for the Wildcat Experience (along with LEADER Plus and Scottish Government).
- Laggan Forest Trust - for the Forest Centre they are currently building as part of their ongoing Development Project.

- Rothiemurhus Ranger Service.

The following general points, however, were indicative of the current relationship between CNPA and the various volunteer-taking organisations within the Park.

- Most organisations pointed to voluntary activities as contributing to the aims of *their* organisation, rather than the National Park as a whole. There was very little reference to the CNAP.
- Several interviewees were keen to point out that in terms of their aims and way of operating, nothing had changed for them as a result of the area becoming a National Park.
- A notable exception was Mar Lodge, who have several meetings with CNPA staff per year in order to align their activities with the strategic priorities of the National Park. This is as a result of a review several years ago, which found that most of what they were doing already fit with National Park aims, and that it was just a case of “formalising” this. This, surely, is the case for most volunteer-taking organisations within the National Park.
- Highland Council Ranger Service also stated that they were in constant contact with CNPA to ensure they are pursuing mutual aims and objectives.

4.12. Difficulties, barriers and suggestions

This section details the common themes that emerged in response to the questions “Are there any particular issues with working with volunteers?” and “Can you identify any further opportunities for environmental volunteering here?” Invariably, responses to the two questions were closely linked, with interviewees suggesting that certain barriers had to be overcome before they could think about further volunteer involvement. Figure 18 summarises the various issues with working with volunteers that were commonly highlighted, as well as the common suggestions as to how to overcome these. At this stage, these are not necessarily recommendations, but give an insight into how volunteer-taking organisations would like CNPA to move forward regarding environmental volunteering. These are then explained in greater detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

Barrier	Common suggestions/ potential solutions
Lack of time and money, perception of risk assessment as time-consuming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team of volunteers recruited and partially trained by CNPA who can volunteer at multiple sites. - More volunteer opportunities organised directly by CNPA, eg. Projects at specific sites; a regular group led by CNPA who meet, say, every week.
Finding suitable tasks for volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects on specific sites set up by CNPA suitable for various level of volunteer commitment. - Taking greater care to determine the expectations of volunteers and ensuring they are prepared for what volunteering at a given site actually involves. - Organisations being more “creative” in thinking of possible roles for volunteers.
Lack of "usefulness" of short-term volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects on specific sites set up by CNPA suitable for short-term volunteer commitment. - Shift in perception of “usefulness” as meaning simply “to get tasks done”.
Volunteers' lack of ability/reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appraisal system as used by RSPB. - Greater care in establishing expectations (of both volunteer and organisation).
Difficulty in recruiting local volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better outreach to local communities and institutions (eg. Schools) by CNPA.
Bureaucracy and funding for small organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simpler system of grant applications? And/or more funding opportunities directed at small, local organisations.
Cuts to social services eg. community service groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater investment by CNPA into direct outreach to social services in eg. Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee.
Lack of (free/subsidised) volunteer accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dedicated volunteer accommodation at one or two sites (eg. Kingussie and Ballater). - Funding for external volunteers/organisations to stay in existing accommodation. - Look into setting up partnerships with eg. SYHA.
Remoteness, distance from urban centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travel allowance for volunteers coming from outside the National Park eg. From Aberdeen, Inverness. - (See above re. volunteer accommodation).

Figure 18: Table summarising current barriers to further environmental volunteering and common suggestions as to how to overcome these.

4.12.1. Time, funding and risk assessment

This refers to the necessary time taken to recruit and train volunteers, and the perceived difficulty of ensuring that voluntary tasks adhere to health and safety standards. Among many of the organisations offering staff-led volunteering, especially those centred around practical conservation tasks, it emerged as the chief barrier to significantly expanding volunteer involvement. Notably, this was not cited as being an issue on sites managed by large organisations such as RSPB (Abernethy, Insh Marshes, Crannach and Loch Garten) and NTS (Mar Lodge), where all the recruitment of and paperwork relating to volunteers is done by a central office. There, an established “system” for involving volunteers has been in place for decades, and management of volunteers was viewed by staff as being a central part of the job. Among the ranger services and smaller sites and organisations, though, it was almost universally cited as a barrier to involving volunteers. It was repeatedly impressed upon me that taking on volunteers is not simply a matter of someone turning up and offering to help with something, but instead necessitated training sessions and a great deal of paperwork.

In most cases, adherence to health and safety requirements, such as completing risk assessments, were cited as the most time-consuming aspect of taking on volunteers. This usually referred to paperwork volunteers must fill out to notify the organisation of next of kin details and any ongoing health issues, as well as training in how to use tools and equipment safely. Often this was viewed as sufficiently time-consuming to make recruiting significant numbers of volunteers impossible. One RSPB site manager, however, expressed the opinion that such considerations need not be such a deterrent. He thought that in reality, it could all be covered in one simple document, and one very short training session for every new volunteer. The problem, he suggested, is that where an established system for recruiting volunteers is not in place, rangers operating independently (that is, without being part of RSPB or NTS) lack the confidence and experience to set one up. Rangers and other site managers, however, often felt that they would need to take on at least another part-time member of staff in order to implement any systematic recruitment of volunteers, pointing out that their limited budget does not allow this.

The perception of the difficulties of health and safety requirements also extends to organisations who may otherwise have visited a site to take part in volunteering. The Head Ranger at Glen Tanar, for example, recalled a school in Aberdeen being very interested in regularly taking a group of students to help with conservation task there, but being eventually put off by the paperwork, risk assessments and extra staff that was required by the local authority for such a day.

Among smaller organisations such as Boat of Garten Wildlife Group, there was a suggestion that “informal” volunteering often takes place among small groups of friends. Whilst there is a potential to expand such operations to involve more members of the community, perceptions of the bureaucracy associated with health and safety considerations makes people reluctant to allow their operations to become “official”.

As well as health and safety considerations, a further constraint is the need for rangers or site managers to supervise volunteers, at least in the initial stages of their volunteering – for example, showing them where things are, or how to carry out certain tasks. Interviewees pointed out that they only had time to do this with a few volunteers, and in many cases, an extra member of staff would be required, dedicated entirely to this role.

Suggestions

- **Team of Volunteer Rangers organised by CNPA:** This suggestion was made by nearly all the ranger services and a number of smaller organisations, and is something that exists in nearly all other UK National Parks. Setting up such a voluntary group would require a new member of staff employed by CNPA, who would be responsible for recruiting volunteers and giving them basic training to new volunteers, who can then be sent out to various organisations on an “as and when required” basis. The desire among ranger services appeared to be for this member of staff to relieve them of any responsibility for risk assessments and training. In reality, there may be site-specific risk assessments and task-specific training required for a person to volunteer with specific organisations. It may be possible, however, for CNPA to provide basic training that would ensure that organisations are provided with willing and competent volunteers. This would help to fulfil the key CNAP aim, 4.1: “Create, support and celebrate a network of ambassadors”.
- **Regular volunteering group organised directly by CNPA:** This emerged as a possibility when speaking to other UK National Park Volunteer Coordinators, many of whom oversee a group who spend, say, one day per week volunteering. The site would change on a week to week basis according to where there are tasks that need to be carried out. The Broads Authority, for example, organises a “Friday Group”, who meet for a day of environmental volunteering every Friday. This may be easier to manage than a team of volunteers as in the last suggestion, who are not time or site-specific. Given the size of the Cairngorms National Park, it may be necessary to organise more than one of these groups.
- **Large-scale projects on specific sites set up by CNPA:** Another possibility would be to create several large-scale, site-specific projects requiring a large number of volunteers who can become involved for as much or as little time as they wish. Again this could be managed by CNPA, and could be carefully selected to meet certain aims of the CNAP. It could be, for example, a large area set aside for reforestation. It would be a model similar to that employed by Trees for Life, where extensive volunteering opportunities are created by the aim of reforesting a large area. Taking on board this suggestion would fulfil CNAP aim 4.6(e): “Create, develop and support new and existing large-scale projects to accommodate volunteering efforts, donations and campaigns”.

4.12.2. Finding suitable tasks and meeting expectations

Several interviewees recalled the past tendency of organisations to recruit volunteers on a “volunteer led” rather than “task led” basis. That is, volunteers were recruited simply so that the organisation could have a higher number of volunteers, in the belief that simply involving as many

people as possible in the organisation would be a powerful means of “drawing them in” to their work and overall aims, even in this meant “inventing” tasks for them to do. It was suggested, however, that especially with long-term volunteers, people “see right through” this approach, and actually find it off-putting. All agreed that instead, it is important to be honest with volunteers about whether or not there are suitable tasks for them at a given site, and only recruit them if this is the case. In short, the best approach is first to find tasks that need doing, and *then* find suitable volunteers to carry them out.

Others referred to the unrealistic expectations some volunteers have as to what conservation and ranger work involves. Interviewees cited several cases of volunteers losing enthusiasm when faced with the reality of necessarily monotonous or strenuous tasks.

Often, it seems, it is genuinely difficult to find tasks suitable for volunteers. RSPB Crannach, for example, is a small site, and aside from occasional corporate groups, the site manager felt he would not have enough tasks to occupy any more volunteers than he already has. At Highland Aspen Group, meanwhile, a staff member suggested that what people often look for in a voluntary experience is a week or weekend away in a sociable group, working on large-scale tasks with obvious results, and that many smaller organisations do not offer such opportunities. HAG, for example, usually require people for “small and fiddly tasks” that do not have obvious results or have a sociable element to them.

Suggestions

- **“Creativity” in thinking of roles for volunteers:** Two RSPB site managers expressed their surprise at peoples’ occasional willingness to volunteer in roles not perceived to be “exciting”. This includes volunteers at RSPB Insh Marshes working on data entry and book-keeping. Organisations should therefore not be afraid to advertise potential voluntary roles just because they are not “exciting” or taking place outdoors.
- **Large-scale projects on specific sites set up by CNPA:** See Section 4.12.1. These projects could be designed so that they are suitable for various levels of volunteer commitment.

4.12.3. Lack of "usefulness" of short-term volunteers

The view of many of the organisations interviewed was that volunteers are only “useful” when involved on a long-term basis, as it takes them a significant amount of time to get to know the site, to develop the necessary skills, and therefore not to require constant staff supervision. Although in some places volunteering was seen as a useful way to carry out simple but large-scale tasks (such as cutting back a large area of invasive species), many believed that supervising volunteers on a task like this creates more work than it saves. Taken in combination with the previous point (Section 4.12.2), this illustrates a difficulty to strike a balance between tasks that engage the volunteer, are suitable for them, and those that are actually “useful” to the organisation.

Suggestions

- **Shift in perception of “usefulness” as meaning simply “to get tasks done”:** Aside from its potential to contribute to the work programme of a given organisation, any work done by volunteers is a contribution to the CNAP aim of “involving people”, as well as a potential means of advocacy for organisations such as RSPB or NTS. Most interviewees were, of course, aware of this, but there remains the issue of the time and resources needed to recruit and train volunteers. The role of any future member of staff dealing with the management of volunteers, however, should be careful to take into account the experiences of the volunteer as much as the impact they are having on the site they are volunteering on.
- **Large-scale projects on specific sites set up by CNPA:** See Section 4.12.1. Again, these could be designed so that they are suitable for both short and long-term volunteers.

4.12.4. Volunteers’ lack of ability and reliability

It was impressed upon me by several rangers and site managers that whilst volunteers *can* be an enormous help, they can at times create far more work than they save, lacking the competence to work unsupervised and therefore taking up a great deal of staff time. This unpredictability appeared in many cases to discourage organisations from taking on volunteers. That is, after a few bad experiences with volunteers, instead of thinking a certain task would be suitable for volunteers, deciding it would be easier simply to do it themselves.

A few organisations cited cases of volunteers being unreliable. At Explore Abernethy, for example, volunteers commit to days at the start of the year, then very often fail to turn up. At times, it seems, volunteers fail to understand that staff rely on them turning up on a day when a big task has been planned, in the same way that they would a paid member of the staff team.

Suggestions

- **Volunteer appraisal system kept by CNPA:** RSPB operate a system like this, where after a person has volunteered at one of their reserves, staff at that reserve fill in a sort of online “reference” for them. The suitability and competence of a *new* volunteer is in this case still unpredictable given that they are recruited centrally by the organisation’s head office, but the system is useful for potential subsequent involvement of volunteers.
- **Greater care in establishing expectations (of both volunteer and organisation):** Within a smaller organisation such as CNPA, the central recruitment of volunteers may make it possible to ensure that volunteers are fully committed to the aims of the organisation and understand what a volunteer’s role may entail. This could in turn give the various organisations within the National Park a better impression of volunteers and their “usefulness”.

4.12.5. Difficulty in recruiting local volunteers

As shown Section 4.6, there is a prevalence of volunteers from outside the National Park over those who live within it. At times this was due to the overall set-up of the organisation (for example, RSPB recruiting volunteers nationwide from the head office), but often it was simply due to a difficulty in finding local residents willing to volunteer. Organisations who rely solely on local volunteers, such as Explore Abernethy, Newtonmore Wildcat Trust and Kingussie CDC, often cited a lack of interest, or at least time, among locals. Similarly, the ranger at NTS Mar Lodge recalled that he had tried to recruit local volunteers there, but was unable to.

For residential volunteers at, say, RSPB sites, the location is part of the experience. Perhaps, several interviewees ventured, volunteering in one's own back yard is more difficult to "sell" to people. One interviewee raised the point that for such residential volunteers, a week volunteering in the Cairngorms is a means of experiencing the countryside, and to temporarily "escape" an urban existence. For people who already live in the area, it is again more difficult to "sell" this as an idea, since living and working in a rural area is not a novelty.

It became apparent through speaking with staff at VABS that many local people *do* engage in voluntary activities. These, however, cannot often be classed as "environmental" volunteering. That is, in the area as a whole, there is a large take-up of voluntary opportunities, but these are most often with "community"-focused activities that have been in place since long before the National Park was set up. Staff at VABS also believed that on the whole, local people have a negative impression of CNPA, but that if relations with local residents could be improved, there would be huge potential for involving them in environmental volunteering activities.

Suggestions

- **Better outreach to local communities:** To involve more local people in environmental volunteering, there appears to be a need to redress the negative impression that CNPA has among members of the various communities within the National Park. This could simply be a case of making people more aware of environmental volunteering opportunities, and could be achieved through employing a member of staff in a "signposting" role, advertising for volunteers and directing them to any of the organisations in the "active organisations" section. It could also be achieved through, as previously suggested, setting up site-specific projects that could then be advertised to local people. Finally, there is a need for better three-way communication between CNPA, the various volunteer-taking organisations, and community-focused organisations such as VABS, who could also help to promote environmental volunteering opportunities.

4.12.6. Bureaucracy and funding

Staff at VABS also recalled situations where local people have tried to set up their own voluntary projects, but have been put off by the daunting process of trying to secure funding for it. This includes requirements such as gaining a First Aid certificate in order for something to become “organised” and “official”, and then having to state measurable aims and impacts of a project. They did not specify the nature of these projects, but pointed to a particular lack of confidence with regard to projects with an environmental focus. They could see the need for such a system in order to ensure that people are serious about their aims, but suggested that the process of securing funding is tipped in the favour of larger organisations that already employ a member of staff with experience of writing funding proposals.

Suggestions

- **More funding opportunities for small, local organisations:** This *does* take place with organisations such as Laggan Forest Trust, but there still appears to be a lack of knowledge about opportunities, and a general lack of confidence among local people when it comes to involving themselves in the aims of the National Park. Perhaps, also, taking greater steps towards promoting existing environmental volunteering opportunities among local people (see previous section) would suffice.

4.12.7. Cuts to social services

This issue was raised by Glen Tanar and Angus Glens ranger services, both of whom used to take on volunteers on community service placements, or from prisons. The ranger at Glen Tanar pointed to the closure of the Bail Hostel in Aberdeen, which previously sent volunteers to complete their John Muir Award there, as well as a “broken link” with those who organise community service placements. In the Angus Glens, meanwhile, interviewees pointed to the closure of nearby Noranside Prison.

Suggestions

- **Better outreach to local communities and community service organisations:** This relates to the points made under “difficulty in recruiting volunteers”, but could be expanded to include social services in urban centres such as Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee.

4.12.8. Lack of accommodation

Several organisations listed this as a barrier to residential volunteers from outside the National Park volunteering on their site. Glen Tanar and Balmoral ranger services, for example, both said that they receive many requests from people to spend some time volunteering there but are put off when they find out that accommodation is not provided. With free (or at least subsidised) accommodation, they say, it would be possible to take on students on University placements, as well as other longer-term volunteers.

Accommodation facilities would also enable organisations from outwith the National Park to bring voluntary groups to sites. Organisations such as TCV and Borders Environmental Education Services have cited this as a barrier to running conservation residentials in the area. At a site like Mar Lodge estate, a dedicated accommodation facility is also a major source of income when there are no voluntary groups present.

Suggestions

- **Dedicated volunteer accommodation:** It may be ideal to have two dedicated accommodation sites given the size of the National Park. If these were in, say, Ballater and Kingussie, they could provide a central base from which people from outside the National Park could volunteer at any of the volunteer-taking organisation in the area.
- **Funding for external volunteers/organisations to stay in existing accommodation:** This may be an easier option than constructing new purpose-built accommodation. There is a hostel in Glen Clova, for example, and the rangers in the Angus Glens cited this as somewhere groups or individuals from outwith the National Park could stay in whilst carrying out voluntary projects.
- **Cooperation with SYHA:** At the Youth Spaces event, it was suggested to me that environmental volunteering days arranged by CNPA could be incorporated into the SYHA's "Give Us a Break" programme in future.

4.12.9. Remoteness and lack of proximity to urban centres

When compared to other UK National Parks, it is clear that there are fewer potential volunteers within easy reach of the Cairngorms, with even Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park recruiting a high percentage of their volunteers from the Greater Glasgow area. Inverness, Aberdeen and (for the Angus Glens) Dundee are the largest nearby urban centres, but even from there, without access to a car, many sites across the National Park remain difficult to access. Many organisations cited this as a barrier to further volunteer involvement. Organisations on Deeside reported that even people from Aberdeen are often unwilling to travel out to their sites due to limited possibilities of reimbursing their travel costs (Muir of Dinnet NNR have a fifty mile limit on this, which does not cover a return trip from Aberdeen).

Suggestions

- **Funding to cover volunteers' travel expenses:** This was suggested by several organisations, and could be a way for CNPA to take small measures towards the further recruitment of volunteers.
- **Dedicated volunteer accommodation:** Or either of the other suggestions in Section 4.12.8.

4.12.10. Other issues

The following were also cited as barriers to further environmental volunteering by several organisations, but no suggestions were made as to how to overcome them, and are certainly not immediately obvious:

- **Weather and short seasons:** This is an issue for organisations such as Butterfly Conservation, who rely on good weather for volunteers to carry out their surveys, or to run events to train people in butterfly and moth identification. It was also cited by several ranger services, who said that volunteers are often not motivated to turn up and help with a task in bad weather, even if they have previously agreed to do so. Given the vagaries of the Scottish climate, especially in a mountainous area like the Cairngorms, this will likely always be a problem!
- **Competition between organisations and “branding” issues:** It should be noted that this was cited by several interviewees as something that might be a problem for *other* organisations, but no organisation actually pointed to it being an issue for them. The concern was basically that organisations would be reluctant to take on volunteers under the banner of “Cairngorms National Park”, instead preferring to say “our organisation has x number of volunteers”, since this may affect potential for funding and advocacy for the organisation.
- **Perception of volunteering as “replacing jobs”:** Several organisations who do not offer volunteering said that a reason they did not do so was that they “wouldn’t want to take jobs away from skilled people”. In most cases this would appear to be a misconception, as volunteers are carrying out tasks that nobody has ever been paid to do – such as wildlife surveys, and relatively “unskilled” tasks such as spending a day cutting back invasive species. The perception extended, at times, to local communities. At RSPB Abernethy, for example, I was told that local people see the RSPB as a huge, rich organisation that should be providing jobs locally, rather than simply attracting more people (volunteers) to come to the area temporarily. Better PR from CNPA (as suggested under some of the previous headings) may extend to addressing this misconception, but it is difficult to think of an obvious, immediate solution.

4.13. Volunteer Survey

As mentioned, the volunteer survey was carried out towards the end of this project, and was less of a focus than the Organisation Survey. Interviewees’ responses, however, appear to fit with much of what had been suggested in the literature review, and in the Organisation Survey. The general points can be summarised as follows:

- Respondents were mostly in the 40-60 and 60+ age categories, although a volunteer from Aberdeen University Conservation Society, in the 18-25 age category, also took part.
- Respondents volunteered at RSPB Crannach, Muir of Dinnet NNR, RSPB Abernethy (two), RSPB Insh Marshes, Balmoral Ranger Service, and Highland Council Ranger Service.
- All were currently happy with the volunteering they were involved in, and had no suggestions for further activities they would like to take part in.

The following was of interest with regard to types of voluntary activity carried out:

- All respondents except one were primarily involved in practical conservation activities. These included building and maintaining fences, path building, dam building, rhododendron clearance, litter picking, tree planting and heather burning.
- One volunteer from RSPB Abernethy also carried out tree felling with a chainsaw.
- One volunteer focused exclusively on a wildlife recording survey – specifically, a weekly butterfly transect at RSPB Insh Marshes.

They listed the following motivations for, and benefits from, volunteering:

- A sociable experience where they could meet new people.
- Keeping fit and healthy.
- “Giving something back” after many years using the area purely for recreational purposes.
- An educational experience. Several volunteers said that despite walking in the mountains for recreational purposes for many years, there were many things they had not noticed, or did not know about. Practical conservation work, they said, “opened their eyes” to many more things. They also cited learning a great deal from the rangers or site managers as a major benefit. Similarly, the volunteer at RSPB Insh Marshes said that her weekly butterfly transect provided a great contrast to working life, forcing her to slow down and pay attention to everything around her.
- The volunteer from Aberdeen University Conservation Society said that volunteering enabled her to explore possible career options.
- One of the RSPB Abernethy volunteers had gained NPTC level 2 Award for a Ground-based Chainsaw Operator, Lantra certification in 4 x 4 vehicles and MIDAS certification for minibus driving.
- The volunteer from Muir of Dinnet NNR had a unique and inspiring story: He was diagnosed with a brain tumour thirteen years ago. He considers himself to be in a “catch 22” situation, finding it impossible to find employment (employers fear he will become severely ill and have to be on long-term sick pay), but also not considered “unwell” enough to claim disability benefits. He feels that volunteering with physical tasks is the best way for him to stay in the best possible physical and mental health. Another motivation, he said, was to inspire other people fighting the same, or similar, illnesses.

5. Recommendations

The following section, based on the findings in the previous section, lays out recommendations as to how CNPA can add value to ensuring that the CNPA offers a range of environmental volunteering opportunities that support the actions of the CNAP. This section consists of the major recommendations, but many of the suggestions in Section 4.12 can be incorporated into these, and should also be taken to account.

5.1. Resource-light recommendations

The following could be implemented as short-term measures, without a great deal of expense, by existing CNPA staff:

CNPA take on a brokering role for environmental volunteering in the park:

This role could be taken on in the short-term by an existing member of CNPA staff. Using the list of organisations in Section 4.1, potential volunteers would be directed to the organisation most suited to their interests, skills, and preferred type of involvement. Ideally, this would also include promotion of volunteering opportunities rather than being purely a “reactive” measure. Opportunities could be posted on the CNPA website and promoted through existing networks such as social media, and community development organisations such as VABS.

Contacting organisations to discuss further environmental volunteering opportunities:

Many interviewees highlighted further volunteering opportunities that may be available within their organisations, stressing that these could become a possibility with help from CNPA staff. Other interviewees thought that some organisations could be more “creative” when thinking of possible voluntary roles. A possible short-term step, then, could be to contact selected organisations to determine specific voluntary roles they might have in mind, and then advertising these as discussed in the previous point.

Contacting corporations to set up volunteer days:

Several interviewees mentioned corporate “away days” or “team challenges” as a potential way to increase volunteer involvement, as well as to bring in added revenue and complete large-scale tasks. For CNPA’s point of view, they are also a valuable contribution to the “involving people” section of the CNAP, raising the profile of the National park and its aim among the wider public. Staff at various organisations said they did not have the time to contact companies to advertise opportunities. This, however, may be a step that CNPA could take to promote further volunteer involvement.

Design and implementation of a procedure for recording volunteering time from providers:

For securing funding from external sources, it is essential to for any project to have measurable impacts. The simplest way to measure and report the positive impact of the further involvement of volunteers is to collect data on annual numbers of volunteers involved in each organisation. The current lack of reliable data highlighted by this report is a shortcoming that needs to be redressed. Such a system would be relatively simple for CNPA to set up, but the most time-consuming aspect would be persuading organisations to participate and then “chasing them up” for their annual volunteer numbers.

5.2. Resource-heavy recommendations

The following are all long-term measures that would require a new member of CNPA staff in a Volunteer Coordinator role:

Volunteer Ranger Service for the Cairngorms National Park:

This would be based on similar groups operating in most other UK National Parks. A Park-wide team of volunteers would be recruited and partially trained by CNPA. Ranger services and other volunteer-taking organisations would inform CNPA of their programme of work on a monthly or quarterly basis, and specify when they have opportunities for volunteer involvement. Members of the team of Volunteer Rangers would then be eligible to volunteer with any of the participating organisations, and sign up for any of the advertised opportunities.

Development of site-specific CNPA-led volunteering opportunities:

With reference to the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, CNPA could create large scale conservation projects on specific sites that create new opportunities for environmental volunteering. This may include, for example the reforestation of large areas, similar to the work of “Trees for Life”. Such a project would have measurable impacts that could be recorded over the years, and would be suitable for various levels and types of volunteer involvement.

Develop community -based environmental volunteering groups throughout the park:

These groups would be set up to redress the imbalance of local/non-local volunteers, and reach out to communities where there are few environmental volunteering opportunities, such as Carrbridge and Grantown. It would also seek to establish opportunities in communities in the Perth and Kinross area of the Park, which were found to constitute a major gap in the provision of opportunities. It may be possible to combine this with the previous recommendation, by setting up and promoting ongoing projects close to communities with limited volunteer involvement.

Appendix 1 – List of volunteer-taking organisations

The following list provides a brief explanation of the types of environmental volunteering opportunities provided by each of the organisations referred to in the Section 4. As in Section 4.1, these are split into Active and Semi-active volunteer-taking organisations, and possible future partnerships.

Active volunteer-taking organisations

A member of the public asking about environmental volunteering within the NP could be immediately signposted to any of the organisations below.

Balmoral Ranger Service

A number of regular groups, mainly from villages on Deeside, Aberdeen, and further afield, mostly engaged in practical conservation tasks. Groups include Junior Rangers residential, students on work experience, a regular D of E group from Strathallan School in Perthshire, Scout groups, students from Aberdeen University Conservation Society, and an archaeological days uncovering old settlement as part of a project called “Scotland’s Rural Past”.

Contact: Glen Jones, glyn.jones@balmoralcastle.com

British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)

BTO provides nationwide opportunities for members of the public to carry out long-term bird surveys (forming part of various larger projects) in a designated area of one square kilometre. These include around eighty volunteers within the National Park.

Contact: Ben Darvill, ben.darvill@bto.org

Butterfly Conservation Scotland

The main focus of Butterfly Conservation is also on carrying out surveys and butterfly transects, and voluntary groups occasionally engage in practical conservation tasks aimed at habitat improvement. Events and training sessions are run on butterfly and moth identification, and volunteers can help out with these as carry out surveys.

Contact: Tom Prescott, tomprescott@btconnect.com

Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) (Adopt a Path scheme)

Adopt a Path is a scheme whereby a volunteer becomes responsible for regularly monitoring the state of a particular path, and notifying COAT of any maintenance required, or access issues that have become apparent.

Contact: Chris York, chris.york@walking-the-talk.co.uk

Crown Estate Ranger Service

Voluntary opportunities are mostly provided on a “reactionary” basis – that is, only when people or organisations contact them directly. There have, however, been numerous weekend projects carried out by organisations from outside the NP, such as New Caledonian Woodlands and TCV, as well as local students on college placements, and contributors to the estate’s own online wildlife recording survey.

Contact: Vicky Hilton, vivky.hilton@thecrownestate.co.uk

Explore Abernethy Ranger Service

This community-run Ranger service is currently in the process of “downscaling” due to funding cuts, but will possibly become even more reliant on volunteers as a result. Volunteers are currently involved in practical conservation tasks, helping to run events, and manning the visitor centre in Nethybridge.

Contact: Melanie Clouston, ranger@nethybridge.com

Glen Tanar Ranger Service

Like nearby Balmoral, Glen Tanar involve numerous groups, mostly from just outside the NP, in practical conservation tasks. These include Junior Rangers, the John Muir Trust’s North East members group, Scouts, Guides, and DofE, as well as students on placements. They used to receive many Community Service and literacy groups, as well as people with mental health issues referred by their social workers, but this has declined in recent years.

Contact: Eric Baird, ranger@glentandar.co.uk

Health Walks

Volunteer leaders lead weekly guided walks at a brisk pace, to promote active lifestyles in a fun, sociable manner. This initiative has been included in the survey as it appeared to be an important way of reaching out to members of the community to engage them with their immediate landscape – and therefore, “involving people” in the National Park.

Contact: Jane Cox (West Cairngorms), j_l_cox@hotmail.co.uk; Alan Melrose (Deeside), alan@walkdeeside.com

Highland Council Ranger Service

The rangers are only directly responsible for a few sites within a large local authority area. They have, however, had a reasonable amount of ad-hoc involvement over the years, including young people looking for experience of practical conservation tasks, and people doing biodiversity surveys. They would be willing to involve more volunteers on a long-term basis at sites such as the pine forest by Feshiebridge, the Lochan by Newtonmore High Street, and the network of paths around the Ralia visitor centre.

Contact: Duncan MacDonald, Duncan.macdonald@highland.gov.uk

Highland Wildlife Park

Current opportunities are limited to a few student placements per year, and occasional groups supported by mental health charities who help out with the “biohubs” (small areas that are fenced off to encourage the spread of flora and small fauna) around the Park. They are, however, in the process of setting up a team of “Education Volunteers” – people who will spend time in the Park giving information to visitors and engaging them with the wider issues faced by the animals there.

Contact: Jasper Hughes, jhughes@rzss.org.uk

Junior Rangers

This is the only voluntary organisation currently directly set up and supported by CNPA, and seemed to be universally applauded by all the organisations it works with. The scheme engages young people in practical conservation tasks by way of a residential, and then a monthly day of further volunteering at a site within the National Park.

Contact: Alan Smith, alansmith@cairngorms.co.uk

Kingussie Community Development Company/Path Group

The Community Development Company consists of a volunteer board of directors, and also engages groups in the maintenance of the Kingussie Mill Trail – a network of footpaths in the village’s

immediate surroundings. They have also helped to host a series of “mini festivals” in the village as part of Creative Scotland 2013, and hope to continue to run events like this.

Contact: Andy Dunn, ammjendunn@aol.com

Laggan Forest Trust

A voluntary board of directors that would be happy to take on new members. Volunteers also help out with running several event per year, and occasionally with non-“typical” tasks, such as book-keeping.

Contact: Robin Jackson, development@lagganforest.com

Newtonmore Wildcat Trust/ Centre

The Wildcat Centre in Newtonmore High Street is an information centre focused on the Wildcat Trail in the village’s surroundings, but in reality, acting as a general tourist information centre about the area. It is run entirely by local volunteers. The voluntary board members of the Wildcat Trust also carry out maintenance work on the trails.

Contact: Sheila Paisley, wildcatnewtonmore@dsl.pipex.com

NTS Mar Lodge Estate Ranger Service

One of the largest providers of volunteering opportunities within the National Park, NTS Mar Lodge takes on a wide variety of voluntary groups, mostly focusing on practical conservation tasks. Volunteers are nearly always from outside the National park, and volunteer on a residential basis, making use of the on-site accommodation. Groups include those recruited centrally by NTS, which consist of Thistle Camp (for over 18s) and Trailblazer Camps (for teenagers).

Contact: David Frew, dfrew@nts.org.uk

Rothiemurchus Estate Ranger Service

Another very significant provider of volunteering opportunities. Volunteers at Rothiemurchus consist mostly of youth groups from organisations such as the Scouts, Boys Brigade, schools, and DofE. These often focus on “giving something back” by maintaining areas they frequently use for outdoor activities. They also annually take on several placement students from a business school in France.

Contact: Julian Orsi, Julian.orsi@rothie.net

RSPB Abernethy Reserve

Again, one of the largest providers of environmental volunteering in the National Park. As with other RSPB sites, Abernethy take on residential volunteer usually for a week at a time, recruited centrally by RSPB. They also have trainee rangers on long-term voluntary placements, and work with many school groups from within the National Park (including many from Grantown Grammar School) and further afield. Finally, they have a dedicated “Friends of Abernethy” group of local volunteers who help out with practical conservation tasks on a regular basis.

Contact: Ross Watson, ross.watson@rspb.org.uk

RSPB Insh Marshes Reserve

Volunteers come mostly from outside the Park, and usually stay for a week, using the on-site accommodation provided. These volunteers, depending on their knowledge and abilities, either help with practical conservation tasks or carry out bird and wildlife surveys. They also, however, have a small number of long-term local volunteers helping out with surveys, admin tasks, and general maintenance work.

Contact: Pete Moore, pete.moore@rspb.org.uk

RSPB Loch Garten (Osprey Centre) Reserve

The Reserve has a very well-established system of volunteering that has operated in the same way for decades. From the third weekend in March through to the end of August, the centre hosts a team of six volunteers every week, recruited centrally by RSPB. Accommodation is provided on site. Their main task is twenty-four hour surveillance of the osprey nests and recording any activity. Volunteers also carry out minor maintenance tasks such as litter picking, and occasionally take on visitor engagement roles such as manning the visitor centre.

Contact: Richard Thaxton, Richard.thaxton@rspb.org.uk

Scottish Mink Initiative (RAFTS)

Here, the volunteer’s role is centred around setting up and surveying a mink raft, usually on a river or stream near their home. On each raft is a small tunnel with clay at its base, which can be checked for mink footprints. This is usually done every twenty-four hours, and activity is then recorded on line or reported to RAFTS staff.

Contact: Ann-Marie MacMaster, ann-marie@rafts.org.uk

3.2.2. Semi-active volunteer-taking organisations

When asking about environmental volunteering opportunities within the National park, it *may* be possible for that same member of the public to be directed towards any of the following organisations. With all of them, however, there are slight uncertainties, such as whether there would be suitable tasks for a volunteer at any given time, how willing the ranger or site manager would be to take them on, and how well-organised their time as a volunteer would be.

Angus Glens Ranger Service

The Ranger Service currently takes on virtually no volunteers, but blames this on the remoteness of the site rather than any lack of willingness on the part of the rangers. They have a number of opportunities for people to assist them with practical tasks and wildlife surveys, and are looking into setting up a local Junior Rangers group in cooperation with local high schools.

Contact: Tom McGrath, mcgrathm@angus.gov.uk

Boat of Garten Wildlife Group (BOGWIG)

The current status of this small, local conservation group is “on tickover” – that is, many of its activities (such as filling bird feeders and monitoring nest boxes) are being carried out, but its members are largely doing this of their own accord rather than their being any overall organisation of it. The Chairman, however, foresees new opportunities within the next few years, as he steps down from a time-consuming post as Chairman of Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Contact: Alan Bantick, allanbantick@yahoo.co.uk

Cairngorm Mountain Ranger Service

There are currently no volunteers working with the Ranger Service, and they have not yet identified opportunities for this to happen. They are sure, however, that such opportunities *do* exist – such as wildlife surveys and assisting with leading guided walks. It seemed that volunteers had been put off in the past by the lack of organisation and clarity as to what was expected of them.

Contact: Nic Bullivant, nic.bullivant@cairngormmountain.org

Highland Aspen Group

Operating from a tree nursery within the grounds of the Highland Wildlife Park, HAG involves a combination of part-time staff and a few local volunteers. Activities include planting the trees in the local area, as well as more skilled tasks such as “grafting”. Volunteers from RSPB Insh Marshes sometimes spend a day or two of their stay there

Contact: John Parrott, john.parrott@coillealba.co.uk

Muir of Dinnet NNR

Like nearby Crannach, the site manager at Muir of Dinnet works with a small team of local volunteers, and is very supportive of volunteering in general. The volunteers help out with maintenance tasks, and also smaller, less “typical” tasks, such as opening and closing the visitor centre when the site manager is away. Further opportunities are limited, but possible.

Contact: Catriona Reid, catriona.reid@snh.gov.uk

New Caledonian Woodlands

This is a small organisation whose work includes taking volunteers, mostly adults from the Central belt, on conservation weekends across the Highlands. These have included a weekend at Anagach Woods near Grantown (in October 2013) and two weekends on the Crown Estate. They usually stay in basic accommodation such as village halls. They would be willing to run more weekends in the Cairngorm in future if new partnerships can be formed

Contact: Donald McPhillimy, Donald.mcphillimy@newcaledonianwoodlands.org

RSPB Crannach Reserve

The site manager at Crannach is very supportive of the idea of volunteering, and currently works with six local volunteers on practical conservation tasks and wildlife recording. It is, however, a small reserve that is currently at full capacity in terms of suitable activities for volunteers. They would, however be interested in taking on occasional corporate groups for “challenge” days, and in taking on more regular volunteers if their work programme changes.

Contact: Stuart Jennings, stuart.jennings@rspb.org.uk

3.2.3. Possible future partnerships

The following organisations currently do not have any volunteering opportunities, but would probably be willing to create them with support from CNPA as it seeks to expand voluntary opportunities within the National Park.

Anagach Woods Trust

I was unable to contact Anagach Woods Trust. They are, however, working in partnership with New Caledonian Woodlands, so are clearly receptive to working with others environmental volunteering projects. It may therefore be worth trying to contact them again.

Contact: Piers Voysey, piers@anagachwoods.org.uk, or piers@voysey.plus.com

Atholl Estate Ranger Service

The estate hosts a Scouts' International Jamborette every two years, and as part of this, has involved scouts in voluntary activities. They have also hosted students on an educational programme for young people interested in careers in land management, organised by Wilderness Scotland and Wilderness Foundation UK. They are, then, supportive of environmental volunteering activities, but currently lack the capacity to expand them.

Contact: Polly Freeman, pf@atholl-estates.co.uk

Borders Environmental Education Services (BEES)

This small organisation based in Selkirk provides Forest School programmes for young people and voluntary opportunities for adults. They have expressed interest in running conservation residentials in the Cairngorms, but would be reliant on funding and/or subsidised accommodation.

Contact: Jan Barr, jbarr@bee-active.org

Buglife

This organisation, which has voluntary projects in various places nationwide, would be very interested in setting a project up in the Cairngorms. They only employ three staff in Scotland, however, and would therefore rely on a good deal of input from CNPA to get anything started.

Contact: Scott Shanks, scott.shanks@buglife.org.uk

Crathie Community Council

Voluntary activities have declined somewhat in the last few years, but the organisation offers good potential for involving local volunteers. There would be opportunities for removing ragwort, re-planting wild flowers by paths, and work on red squirrel conservation. They are very keen to get more volunteers involved.

Contact: Jane Angus, janeangus33@hotmail.co.uk

Dee Fisheries Trust

There are currently no voluntary opportunities with Dee Fisheries Trust, but will be potential new opportunities from next year. This includes large-scale tree planting, some INNS work, as well as “electro surveying” of fish populations in upland rivers. They are very keen to work with CNPA.

Contact: Edwin Third, Edwin@riverdee.org

Edinburgh Young Carers Project

This organisation offers respite to young carers in Edinburgh by engaging them in educational activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. They would be interested in running, for example, a “Gold”-level residential involving environmental volunteering in the Cairngorms.

Contact: Jamie Faichney, jamie.faichney@youngcarers.org.uk

ENABLE

An organisation working with people with learning difficulties, ENABLE have previously worked with Venture Scotland, so are aware of the benefit of outdoor learning and environmental volunteering. They would be interested in setting up voluntary projects in the Cairngorms.

Contact: Chris Hellowell, chris.hellowell@enable.org.uk

NTS Killiecrankie Ranger Service

Killiecrankie are worth mentioning because they are the only ranger service I was unable to contact. They may, therefore, have volunteering opportunities that have not made it into this report, and may be worth contacting again in future. Contacting them could be of extra importance as there appear to be very few environmental volunteering opportunities in the Perth and Kinross area of the Park.

Contact: Emma O’Shea, eoshea@nts.org.uk

South Esk Catchment Partnership

This is a partnership formed around a management plan for the River South Esk catchment area, involving Angus Council, SNH, CNPA and RAFTS. It is only the upper reaches of the catchment area that lie within the National Park, but they have been looking into getting volunteers involved in tasks such as removing and spraying invasive species.

Contact: Kelly-Ann Dempsey, dempseyk@angus.gov.uk

Scottish Youth Hostel Association (SYHA)

SYHA operate four hostels within the National Park, which are sometimes used as part of their “Give us a break” programme – a funded residential programme for disadvantaged young people to go on activity holidays at hostels across Scotland. Their Chief Executive suggested that environmental volunteering days arranged by CNPA could be incorporated into this in future.

Contact: Keith Legge, keith.legge@syha.org.uk

SNH

SNH has several National Nature Reserves within the National Park, but only one of these – Muir of Dinnet – has volunteers recruited directly by SNH. They are, however, looking into creating voluntary opportunities, and this may take into account their other NNRS within the National Park such as Craigellachie, Invereshie and Inshriach, and Corrie Fee.

Contact: Alison Matheson, alison.matheson@snh.gov.uk

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

Recently re-branded and previously BTCV, TCV ran a residential project with young people in the Cairngorms some years ago in partnership with Project Scotland. Apparently, however, both TCV and CNPA were unclear at the time as to how they wanted to take volunteering like this forward. Recently, however, they have developed a scheme called the Employability Award in the Outdoors, where courses for young people involving environmental volunteering are run by TCV staff. They would be interested in running these with local young people within the National Park.

Contact: Jenny Adams, j.adams@tcv.org.uk

The Green Team

The Green Team are an Edinburgh-based charity that aims to re-connect young people with the natural world through environmental volunteering and the delivery of the John Muir Award. Most of their activities are based in Edinburgh and the Lothians, but they run one week-long residential per year further afield. They have expressed interest in taking a group of young people to the Cairngorms if a suitable partnership with a ranger service or other local organisation could be set up.

Contact: Penny Radway, penny@greenteam.org.uk

Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust

Economic regeneration is TGDT’s current priority, but getting people involved in environmental volunteering, perhaps in partnership with Crown Estate ranger service, is part of their “masterplan”.

This includes involving local schools with whom they have a close working relationship. They have also entered the competition for funding as part of the Cairngorm Orchard Project.

Contact: Lindsay Robertson, tgd@gmail.com

Trees for Life

This organisation is best-known for reforestation activities on its own Dundreggan Estate. It is, however, in the process of establishing reforestation projects in other parts of Scotland. At various locations in the area between Skye and Inverness, they have run Conservation Weeks involving two members of staff and a team of volunteers. They have also been welcoming more local volunteers who help out for one day at a time. They are very interested in setting up projects in the Cairngorms.

Contact: Kirsty Ellen, Kirsty@treesforlife.org.uk

Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS)

VABS is an umbrella organisation that takes on volunteers across the area and signposts them to various volunteering opportunities. Currently, none of these are focused on environmental or conservation activities. With better communication between CNPA and local communities, however, VABS believe that there would be considerable interest in such activities if the opportunity arose. They could also potentially work in partnership with CNPA as a “signposting” organisation.

Contact: Victoria Fuller, volunteeringwithvabs@gmail.com

Wilderness Scotland

As mentioned, Wilderness Scotland have worked with Wilderness Foundation UK to deliver an educational programme for young people interested in careers in land management and/or leadership on outdoor journeys such as theirs. This includes delivery of the John Muir Award, and was based on Atholl Estate and at Mar Lodge. Their staff team have also carried out conservation weekends. They would be happy to be put on a mailing list of volunteering opportunities, and would help promote them for the National Park via their social media.

Contact: Myles Farnbank, myles@wildernessscotland.com

Appendix 2 – Sample Organisation Surveys

Environmental Volunteering Survey/Audit

Organisation: Glen Tanar Ranger Service

Interviewee/contact: Eric Baird, ranger@glentantar.co.uk

1. What current opportunities for environmental volunteering are there here?

i) Location/s

ii) What they do?

Junior Rangers: Five-day intro here, then days on follow-up programme.

John Muir Trust North-East members: One Saturday per month. Bring their own tools, hands-on conservation, organised groups. Things such as putting tree guards on “amenity planning”(?), making fences more visible so don’t harm capercaillie, black grouse, etc.

Scouts, Guides, DofE: Often use the informal campsite here, and ranger service invite groups who camp in it to do litter-picking, chopping wood, conservation tasks, etc. Usually Scouts on summer camps (ie. here for more than a day or two) who do the volunteering. John Muir Award/ environmental education often fitted in with it.

Student placements: eg. Conservation biology student gaining summer holiday work experience there now.

“CV-boosting people”: Can be difficult to accommodate as don’t have any definite idea what they want to learn.

Community service and literacy groups: Used to be almost continuously, not now.

People referred by social workers: With mental health issues. Letter just this morning from someone recovering from an illness. These people can be great, or they can be a liability. Eg. What if they forget to take their meds?

School pupils on work experience: 3-4 days.

iii) When/how often?

John Muir Trust North-East members: One Saturday per month

Placement students: Usually one every summer holiday.

iv) Who (demographic)?

Broad demographic. Eg. One JMT group Eric had: Two students, two retired GPs, a Church of Scotland minister, and a retired meteorologist.

Community service tend to be in their twenties.

Significant portion of volunteers here have mental health issues.

v) How many volunteers?

See CNPA figures, or Justin at CNPA office might know.

vi) Why?

- Way of engaging with public that's not just guided walks. Eric does everything he can to avoid guided walks! There are much more productive ways of engaging with people – eg. The art project that the placement student and another ranger are currently being shown, for purposes of environmental education. Important for it to involve “getting their hands on something”.
- Health agenda: Eric has really made the effort re. Outreach. Eg. People come from Cornhill psychiatric hospital in Aberdeen.
- Hitting conservation agendas.

2. In partnership with any other organisation?

“Correct answer: yes!” But in reality... (see 3)

JMT, arts project, Dof E, schools.

3. Are any of the activities carried out done so as part of an agreement with CNPA?

Nothing new as a result of it becoming a NP. Everything Eric does now, he did before that.

4. How do you recruit volunteers?

- **Outreach:** eg. Cornhill. Get them here, just to go for a walk, then tell them what other opportunities there might be for them, conservation-wise.
- Broadens scope to people from urban areas.

5. What do you offer the volunteer?

- Equipment: but what they give out always gets lost or thrown away!
- Tools and equipment.
- Tool talks, safety inductions.

6. Are there any particular issues with working with volunteers?

- Equipment gets lost/thrown away.
- Can be problematic with equipment, eg. People don't want to wear the wellies as they've had other peoples' feet in them, etc. So wear own boots, but no steel toe caps.
- Logistics: 5 miles up the valley from Aboyne, and the main road, so how would they get more people here?
- Volunteers can be a huge help, but they can be a major hassle.
- As a general rule, volunteers don't really help in the short term. They're only a real help once they've been fully trained, know their way around and how to do things (but organised one-off groups doing big tasks?)
- "Collapse" of social services in Aberdeen City/Shire: eg. Bail hostel closed. They used to come out and do their John Muir Award. Also community service. So there's a "broken link" with social services. Communications with them, setting up volunteers etc is difficult now.
- Liability: health/criminal issues.
- Not having the time to fit training etc in. Volunteers are not going to be immediately productive.
- Finding suitable tasks.
- Northfield Academy (Aberdeen) recently wanted to come out here. But couldn't get transport, supply teachers, etc. Up to the PTA to organise it, but PTA in Northfield?! So funding not just a problem for the ranger services, but for the investment in environmental education etc by other organisations, eg. Schools. CNPA doesn't grasp this.
- CNPA: Lot of talk of "talking, trying, thinking of..." – just do it!

7. Can you identify any further opportunities for environmental volunteering here?

- Should be more community service!
- Park could pick up on community liaison, outreach. A lot of effort for rangers to do it.
- Further outreach to largest part of the population eg. Poorer, not middle classes.
- More of all in Q1. Very willing to accommodate it.

Environmental Volunteering Survey/Audit

Organisation: RSPB Abernethy

Interviewee/contact: Ross Watson, ross.watson@rspb.org.uk

- Main season is September to March. "Management season", outwith the summer, breeding etc happens in summer and therefore observing, monitoring, although still some management work to be done. Most volunteers required then.

1. What current opportunities for environmental volunteering are there here?

i) Location/s

RSPB owns a huge amount of land in the area, but all of the voluntary activity takes place in the forest area – their reserve.

ii) What they do?

Work mostly consists of:

- Pulling trees over to create dead wood.
- Re-wetting woodlands, ie. Building dams.
- Removing non-native tree species.
- Building/fixing fences.
- Deer stalking (peoples' perception is of an 'exclusive' hobby, so often very pleasantly surprised, and keen to get involved.
- Quite a few other things, as and when required.

A lot of groups helping them with it:

- Individuals on work experience through schools. Some come for a residential week, eg. From Glenurquhart High school in Dingwall.
- Work programme through YMCA, has happened a few times. NEET, put through several weeks' voluntary work here, wildlife park, and Creag Megaidh (SNH).

- Field trips from education establishments, courses in countryside management, forestry, land management, etc. Scottish School of Forestry, Reading University, Elmwood College (Fife), Sparsholt College (Hampshire), George Watson's (Edinburgh).
- Grantown Grammar School do John Muir Award here. 9 sessions of 2 hours August – November.
- Local volunteer group: Usually at least one day per week, help with almost any task asked of them. From Nethy, Boat of Garten, etc. Given specific independent tasks to do during summer eg. Trailer maintenance, grass cutting.
- Friends of Abernethy: Group of people who pay an extra donation to Abernethy, over and above RSPB membership fee, to help Abernethy specifically. Some people involved in the running of the group, as volunteers.
- Scout groups: RSPB as a whole have formal agreement with the Scouts to provide volunteering opportunities on its reserves for groups. Sometimes host them here.
- Residential volunteer warden scheme: People can apply for periods of 1-3 weeks at a time. Work with the team taking part in all practical work and research.
- D of E Gold residential.
- Long term volunteer placement: One every year. Stay on site from September to March. Training and accommodation provided. Also gain qualifications eg. Tractor driving, deer management, argo-cat driving. 100% employment rate after that, within NPs, ranger services, RSPB, etc. Quite competitive to get on it.
- MSc/ PhD students: Use Forest Lodge as a base to work from. They have a list of titles for areas that need researching, students can then choose to come and do them.
- Family fun day every two years: around sixty volunteers required to run it.

iii) When/how often?

Various, from once a week, to full-time seasonal posts, to one-off residential groups for a week.

iv) Who (demographic)?

School, college, scout groups: young people.

Local volunteer group: mostly retired, elderly.

v) How many volunteers?

Hundreds! (Attempt to contact for more accurate figures).

vi) Why?

- Very useful to have the volunteer assistant warden as they can't afford to employ one. Quite a bit of this is about finance, unfortunately.
- Trying to engage with the local community (with the non-residential opportunities).
- Education of young people: how can they engage with the idea of protecting an area, conserving nature, etc, if they've never had direct experience of it?

2. In partnership with any other organisation?

Schools, John Muir Award, CNPA, Volunteer Highland (volunteers who gained their 100-hour Millenium Volunteer Award), Scouts.

Also direct partnership with school on family fun day, as well as the Mountain Rescue team, who run a zip-wire.

3. Are any of the activities carried out done so as part of an agreement with CNPA?

Yes with the John Muir Award. Eg. Alan currently organising lots of young groups to help with tree planting.

4. How do you recruit volunteers?

- People who volunteer residentially: RSPB has brochure of all the vacancies. Opened in November, high demand so filled really quickly, often with "repeat offenders"(!), people who keep coming back.
- If people volunteer for more than six days per year with RSPB, have to fill in a small form so that they're on the insurance. Small form, very little effort.
- They inform head office of the weeks when they are looking for volunteers.
- Older volunteers in the area tend to be friends/relatives of people who work here.
- Residential: CRB checked, etc.
- Work experience (schools): Approached by pupils themselves.

5. What do you offer the volunteer?

- Training and qualifications (for the long-term residential volunteers): eg. Arco-cat driver license, tractor driver license, deer management. + a lot of knowledge gained.
- Free accommodation.
- Fantastic life experience!

6. Are there any particular issues with working with volunteers?

- Work Visas for people from outside the UK/EU. Volunteering counts as "work", especially when being "paid in kind" with free accommodation, etc.

- Volunteering is (or should be) a “task led” industry, ie. Find the tasks first, then the volunteers, rather than having to find the tasks for them. People aren’t stupid, and they “see right through” that. Has happened the wrong way round a few times before.
- Volunteers are never in short supply here. Often they’re fantastic people, really amazed and inspired to be there, but sometimes they can be a nuisance. May be not what they expected, too remote, etc. Appraisal system on volunteer section at head office, saying how good someone was, like job references for next time...
- Local perception of volunteering: RSPB has reputation as huge, rich organisation, and therefore should be providing jobs locally, not just attracting more middle-class English people (volunteers) to come to the area temporarily.

7. Can you identify any further opportunities for environmental volunteering here?

- More work experience from Grantown, Kingussie etc schools.
- Local volunteer group: more the merrier! (Yes, this is exactly what fits in with this project, we need to promote these better...)
- Trying to build contacts with Scout groups across the Highlands.
- Junior Rangers: Don’t host them at the moment, but hopefully will soon.
- Tree planting: Creates long-term connection for people. “I planted that tree”. Alan setting up groups of young folk locally to do this.
- Deer: Something people are fascinated by. And a great, different way for locals to see the landscape they live in. Wouldn’t normally be out on the hill at 3AM! (Opportunity for a few more people here – organised informally at the moment – but not feasible to have volunteers all the time, as make twice as much noise as just one person, etc.)
- Finding more people to do the tasks. Big groups would be good.
- Counting species, recording.
- Individuals can come along. Always welcome. Extra pair of hands, just tag along to start with. Easily arranged on a short-term basis: eg. “sure, we have a school group on Tuesday, come and help out!” ONLY if they like the idea, and something actually needs doing, though.

Environmental Volunteering Survey/Audit

Organisation: Boat of Garten Wildlife Group (BOGWIG)

Interviewee/contact: Allan Bantick, allanbantick@yahoo.co.uk (also Chair of Scottish Wildlife Trust).

Bogwig is affiliated to Boat of Garten Community Company, a ltd co and umbrella organisation for all smaller organisations in the village. Gives out funding when required, etc.

1. What current opportunities for environmental volunteering are there here?

i) Location/s

In and around the village, eg. Adjacent woodlands.

ii) What they do?

- Badger Hide: this also provides a bit of an income from tourists who are occasionally led on walks to the hides. Otherwise, maintenance of the hides, keeping surveys on badgers.
- Crested tit nestbox programme: putting up and maintaining the nestboxes around the village, to encourage population increase of rare bird (only found in Scotland, mostly in Cairngorms).
- Golden Eye nesting box programme: same idea, for Goldeneye ducks. On ponds etc.
- Filling the bird “feeders” around the village.
- Help the primary school (which is an “Eco School”) with John Muir Award. Have one projects on red squirrels and capercaillies.
- Current status is “on tickover”, ie nothing new going on, no time to organise it.

iii) When/how often?

As and when. Small tasks, often.

iv) Who (demographic)?

Mostly retired people (“reflects the demographic of the village”)

v) How many volunteers?

Officially 50, but probably 8 who are routinely active.

vi) Why?

Passionate about wildlife!

2. In partnership with any other organisation?

CNPA a little (see below...)

3. Are any of the activities carried out done so as part of an agreement with CNPA?

- Have received funding from CNPA, for a Phase 1 habitat survey, and a small festival as part of "Wildlife Week".
- CNPA also gave money to the Community Company to fund a local ranger. People really related to a "Boat of Garten" ranger, because community community perhaps more important to them than the NP.

4. How do you recruit volunteers?

People just get in touch, usually through the Community Company.

5. What do you offer the volunteer?

6. Are there any particular issues with working with volunteers?

- Difficult to get people to come to meetings. All seem to be "doing their own thing" re. wildlife in the area.
- Time! Allan is also chair of Scottish Wildlife Trust, so no time to devote to BOGWIG, and no one else seems to be willing to take the initiative.
- CRB/disclosure. Time taken to do it is a "deterrent".

7. Can you identify any further opportunities for environmental volunteering here?

- More of the same.
- Mammal surveys, eg. Pine martens. Allan and Heather (his wife) both did a course on this with Mammal Society. They have projects people can get involved with.
- If the NP could do the CRB checks/disclosures for everyone, that would be a huge help...
- Badger Watch leaders.
- What Explore Abernethy do. A good example...

Appendix 3 – Sample Volunteer Surveys

Volunteer Survey

1. Personal Details:

- i) **Name:** Duncan Tunstall
- ii) **Age:** 40-60
- iii) **Gender:** Male
- iv) **Organisation volunteering for:** Muir of Dinnet NNR

2. What environmental volunteering do you take part in? Eg. For whom? Activities?

Whatever he's asked to do. Mostly simple manual tasks, eg. Picking up rubbish, digging, moving things around. Anything requiring manpower!

3. What is your motivation for doing it?

Diagnosed with a brain tumour 13-14 years ago and is "unemployable" as a result (but also "too healthy" to claim disability benefits – bit if a catch 22). Potential employers too scared to employ him incase suddenly gets really ill and has to be on sick pay for a long time.

Feels that physically, working, but not "flat out", helps the body to fight the illness.

Also puts out a message to the next generation of people fighting this illness: that you can still get out and do things, and keep going for years, instead of it being "three year death sentence" as previously thought.

4. What do you feel you get from taking part?

Keeps him busy/amused while unable to work.

Fun to do something constructive.

Educational: he's been walking in the hills since 1972, but hardly noticed anything on the way to summits or climbs. Doing this opens your eyes to everything that's going on there. Focusing in on one thing. Compares it to a book ("Zen and the Art...") where students are told instead of looking at the big picture, to focus in on one thing and write an essay about that...

Very thankful to Catriona at the reserve for taking him on despite the apparent risks.

5. Are there any other types of volunteering opportunities you would like to take part in?

If there's anything else in the area requiring man-power and enthusiasm, chances are he'd be happy to do it.

Communication again: getting the message out there, letting people know about the opportunities...

Volunteer Survey

1. Personal Details:

- i) **Name (optional):** Hilary Quick
- ii) **Age (delete as appropriate):** 40-60
- iii) **Gender (delete as appropriate):** F
- iv) **Organisation volunteering for:** RSPB Insh Marshes

2. What environmental volunteering do you take part in? Eg. Path maintenance, tree planting, visitor engagement?

Counting butterflies (butterfly transect) once a week. Same route/walk every time. Very limited by weather (eg. Can't do it if it's too windy, rainy, etc), but gives an idea of when the butterflies (which typically live for 2/3 weeks) are there.

3. What is your motivation for volunteering?

Hilary is an active orienteer and works for the Scottish Orienteering Association at Glenmore Lodge. Doing a butterfly transect provides a total contrast to the world of orienteering: moving slowly through a place, paying attention to everything, b able to stay still, and look closer.

Also, meeting different people who she wouldn't otherwise meet.

4. What do you feel are the benefits for you of taking part? Eg. Health, Social, new skills?

Taking life at a slower pace, being able to see things differently, and meet different people.

5. Are there any other types of volunteering opportunities you would like to take part in?

Probably too busy at the moment. Thought about doing more work at Insh Marshes, but discovered sea kayaking! Feels she has access to all the info she needs about volunteering.

