

**Draft Minute of the Meeting of the Ranger Service Working Group
Held in Tomintoul
On 30 July 2004 at 15.30**

Present:

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

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

Welcome

1. Richard Stroud opened the meeting by explaining that the group had been unable to attend the scheduled visit to Glenlivet because the planning meeting had extended way beyond lunch to 15:30. Richard asked Pete Crane to write, on behalf of the working group, to Andy Wells and apologise for the lack of attendance and arrange a new date for a visit if possible. **Action PC.**

Apologies

2. There were no apologies.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

3. This ad-hoc meeting of Ranger Service Working Group replaced the intended visit to Glenlivet. It had not been scheduled as a formal meeting. Therefore, the adoption of the minutes from 14 May was carried over to the next meeting.

Matter Arising

4. Carried over to next meeting (see above)

Information Update

5. Pete Crane informed the Group that he had met with seven ranger services to date: -

Angus Council

Forestry Commission Scotland, Glenmore

Highland Council

HIE CairnGorm Mountain

Rothiemurchus

Invercauld Estate

Crown Estate, Glenlivet

6. All services visited had welcomed the opportunity to meet with a representative of the Park and had been very open in their discussion. All were aware that any proposals to develop a pan Park identity were likely to be enacted over a period of years: there was a high degree of realism about the pace and process of any change.
7. While it was too early to make any recommendations it was clear, when viewed in the context of the National Park as a whole, the workings of the individual services is complex and intricate. For example, all seven services visited are funded in different ways. Three of the services visited receive no input from SNH to directly fund rangers. The SNH funding with the other four services varies considerably.
8. There is no obvious rationale for the number of rangers working in an area: it does not, for example, appear to be linked to visitor numbers, pressures or needs. There are also large areas of the Park which lack a ranger presence notably Glenfeshie and Laggan, although there may be similar gaps on the east.
9. Sally Dowden stated that although the Ranger Services had possibly grown on an ad hoc basis pan-Park, some from a needs assessment and some from a funding availability basis, the fact that there were gaps in the area didn't necessarily mean that visitors were missing out. There may be another perfectly competent method of managing visitors expectations and activities in these gap areas. All options should be explored. Willie McKenna added that the number of rangers was often dictated simply by the funds available.
10. Eric Baird suggested that it was not just a case of looking to fill any gaps in the provision but also identifying areas where activity could be improved. The Park should have high aspirations for the ranger services.
11. Both Eric Baird and Willie McKenna were interested in the differences between ranger services based on estates and those, all working for local authorities, whose remit was not linked directly to the management of a specific area under one ownership. Pete Crane stated that he had not met with enough services to give accurate feedback. However, he intended to be able to provide more structured feedback at the next meeting.
12. Murray Ferguson suggested that as well as meeting with each service, there would be a need to present the Park wide perspective to the ranger service managers and seek their input.

Dates for next meeting

13. The August meeting was rescheduled to afternoon of 24 September in Ballater.